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ABSTRACT

This paper is a description of a union-sponsored workplace literacy program conducted in a large metropolitan hospital. The section following the introduction presents the research methodology, including data collection and data analysis procedures. The section entitled "The Making of a Workplace Literacy Program" looks at the planning stages of the program, including the selection of educational model, start-up, and shaping of the curriculum. The next section, titled "Teacher Talk," discusses the class organization and how the structure of lessons and interaction shaped participation, learning, and the type of literacy to which people were exposed. The fifth section, titled "Student Talk," discusses what student-driven learning looked like in this program, as opposed to teacher-driven interaction. "Dealing with the Issues" looks at issues of attendance and how certain assumptions about adult students, what they know, and what their interests are influenced retention. It also reexamines the educational model proposed for this workplace program in light of the preceding analysis. The final section addresses these lessons learned: the complexity of implementing a workplace literacy program; how the unique characteristics of a workplace influence program development and implementation; workers' diverse interests and goals; pedagogy as a main concern; and importance of staff training. (Appendixes include 68 references and some program forms.) (YLB)

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National Center for Research in
Vocational Education

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**OPPORTUNITIES LOST AND
LESSONS LEARNED:
INSIDE A
WORKPLACE LITERACY
PROGRAM**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a description of a union-sponsored workplace literacy program conducted in a large metropolitan hospital. Like many other projects being done around the country, the one reported in here responds to the contemporary view that many working adults need further education. For some time, they have been located within the context of community colleges, or as part of ongoing adult education efforts. A more recent trend, however, considers the workplace to be "the ideal setting for basic skills instruction" (Chisman, 1989, p. 14) for several reasons. First, it is believed to be convenient for workers who as adults already have many commitments to their families and communities (*The Bottom Line*, 1988). Second, workplaces are also seen as naturally providing support to adult workers because "learners who share similar job experiences support each other. Their group experience reinforces learning" (Sarmiento & Kay, 1990, p. 14). Furthermore, it is thought that using work as the basis for basic skill improvement facilitates learning because it "incorporates a worker's or trainee's prior experience," improving concentration and learning efficiency (Askov, Aderman, & Hemmelstein, 1989, p. 3-4).

Proponents of workplace literacy programs have suggested that the development of partnerships and cooperative relationships (among employees, supervisors, educational providers, consultants, top-level management, and labor leaders) is important for creating them. Widespread support and early involvement of workers is recommended by some (*The Bottom Line*, 1988; Sarmiento & Kay, 1990) to gain the trust and interest of employees and to eventually boost recruitment efforts. Advocates for these partnerships believe that programs perceived as "in-house" by workers—and potential students—are likely to gain their trust more easily (Askov et al., 1989; *The Bottom Line*, 1988; Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990). Despite the antagonistic nature historically attributed to labor-management relationships, partnerships are encouraged for training purposes. These are billed as a win-win situation where because of common shared interests, both sides are considered to be in a position to gain: management improves productivity and competitiveness and labor helps secure job security and mobility for its membership. Because of this unique situation, both sides of the table are depicted as being willing and supportive partners.

Advocates of workplace programs believe that Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs suffer from chronic low retention rates and that placing programs on site may help remedy this situation. Students who presumably know each other from their work day will help build a supportive environment for learning based on their shared work experiences, their familiarity with job procedures, and their trust of each other. Furthermore, "work" as a content is thought to give immediacy and relevancy to the skills that workers are taught. It is argued that learning literacy and numeracy abilities that would have immediate application in the students' jobs would cause self-improvement, resulting in advancement, promotion, and economic gain, and further resulting in improving their self-esteem and pride (Darkenwald, 1986; Sticht, 1988).

Keeping class content and materials job-specific is also considered to be an important feature of many workplace programs. The standard recommendation of most workplace literacy how-to manuals for setting up programs is to pinpoint and define employees' needs through literacy audits and job-task assessments. These terms have come to be synonymous with systematically scrutinizing workers' job performance and discovering those areas or tasks that are difficult for workers to carry out. Most procedures are particularly sensitive to examining the effect of introducing new technology, procedures, or organizations into the workplace. It is believed that workers' learning needs and interests can be discovered through the observation of work, interviews with supervisors and employees, and the analysis of written materials used on the job.¹

As it was pointed out, using work-based materials and tasks is based on the belief that workers will see immediate use for the basic skills that they are learning. Furthermore, proponents argue that it is precisely the use of work-based materials that motivates working adults to attend classes and gives meaning to the learning efforts made by workers, thereby making basic skills more readily available to them. Askov et al. (1989) state that workplace literacy is meaningful to adults because "it is basic skills instruction which uses the language, tasks, and knowledge of the workplace" (p. 3-1).

¹ Even Sarmiento and Kay (1990), who discourage such procedures because of potentially abusive uses of their results that may endanger workers' employment and opportunities for advancement, still go on to propose very similar procedures. They propose a series of discussions with union officers, stewards, staff and members, and sympathetic supervisors based on questionnaires concerned with perceived difficulties and training needs on the job. They also propose worker participation in the analysis of job classifications and observations of work.

These assumptions and others can be found in many of the workplace how-to-do manuals in the form of prescriptions (Askov et al., 1989; *The Bottom Line*, 1988; Carnevale et al., 1990; Chisman, 1989; Philippi, 1991; Lund & McGuire, 1990). However, they cannot be challenged or accepted in the abstract. Understanding their viability or the difficulties that may arise when trying to implement them requires examining programs where they are enacted. In this paper we propose to do just that: to look at a workplace program that started from many of these premises.

Once we begin to examine a program, however, other issues become involved. It is not possible to divorce the implementation of a proposed educational program from what is being taught, from theories and beliefs about learning that inform a program staff, or from issues that may arise from student-teacher interaction. In our examination of this one literacy program, therefore, pedagogy is a central issue.

We wanted to see what happened in a program based on some of these assumptions and how they played out in the context of the classroom where students and teachers engage in learning activities. Because we believe that learning is a gradual process of building new understandings from existing ones, we looked carefully at how students displayed what they knew and how the teacher capitalized on students' existing knowledge (Britton, 1969/1990; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, because social interaction plays a key role in the construction of knowledge, we were particularly concerned with teacher-student and student-student exchanges that occurred in the classroom (Cazden, 1988; Erickson, 1988; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Because we view literacy as a social practice, we closely examined the set of activities, purposes, and uses of written language that constituted reading and writing in this class (Dyson, 1989; Heath, 1983; Reder, 1988; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984).

The project reported on in the pages that follow also professed to place high value on the social dimensions of learning during the planning process. Many steps were taken to innovate different aspects of classroom life and materials for learning, particularly the creation of an educational model by a consultant to the program with the explicit intention of providing social support for students taking the classes. However, when plans were put to practice, when there were teachers and students and activities, several difficulties emerged that stood in the way of their full realization. In all fairness, it must be pointed out that the task that the program staff undertook was a most difficult one. Because they were

dedicated adult educators with years of experience and well aware of many of the pitfalls currently faced in adult education, they chose to create innovative and original ways of dealing with some of these problems. Yet, as it will be shown, they had a great deal of difficulty enacting their new ideas. This was due partly to their "newness," the fact that they had never done a program quite like the one that they were now trying to enact. But it was also due, we believe, to the constant resurgence of old thinking and the reemerging of familiar ways of doing things in the classroom as well as an inability to adjust their ideas to their students' needs and interests. While we will describe in a great deal of detail a number of teaching and learning practices that we observed, these must be seen as attempts of the program staff's learning to teach adults in a new way when there are practically no examples or models to build on. They took many risks and from them we all stand to learn about how difficult it is to think about old educational problems in new ways.

Throughout the paper we will deal with issues at two analytical levels—the broader, macro level of program conceptualization from the planning stage into practice, and the more micro level of educational implementation: the nitty gritty of teaching and learning in the classroom. Specifically, we will address such questions as the following:

1. What were the educational goals of program planners and how did they envision the realization of these goals? What were the underlying assumptions about students, learning, and work that drove their plans for the program?
2. What were the factors that shaped the implementation of the educational model and how did the model evolve during this implementation? How did the students respond to the curriculum and instructional interaction that resulted from implementation of this model?

In order to answer these questions, the next section will present our research methodology, including data collection and data analysis procedures. The section entitled, "The Making of a Workplace Literacy Program," will look at the planning stages of the program where we will see many of the same assumptions guiding the decision-making process that we have reviewed here. The fourth section entitled, "Teacher Talk," will discuss the class organization and how the structure of lessons and interaction shaped participation, learning, and the type of literacy people were exposed to while the fifth section entitled, "Student Talk," will discuss what student-driven learning looked like in this program, as opposed to teacher-driven interaction. "Dealing with the Issues" will look

at issues of attendance, and how certain assumptions about adult students, what they know and what their interests are, influenced retention. It also re-examines the educational model proposed for this workplace program in light of the preceding analyses. The final section will discuss the lessons learned from this research and provide recommendations for the creation of workplace literacy programs in light of these lessons.

BEING THERE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS

We became involved with the International Brotherhood of Hospital Workers' (IBHW) program as the project evaluators. Our participation resulted from the direct invitation of the program director and we were assured full access to all participants as well as to his personal notes and a journal that he committed to keep for the purpose of evaluation. The data reported in here is selected from information collected during our seven-month relationship with the program that covered the start-up period, the Summer pilot program and the two months that followed. While the program continued for another nine months, we did not follow it through to completion due to circumstances discussed later in this section.

At the onset of the program, our efforts began without the hostility that often characterizes evaluation situations, and initially our dealings with the program director were with complete cooperation. He endorsed our intentions to study the implementation of the program model from the perspective of those involved and saw our collaboration as a valuable resource that could inform their efforts to create an innovative workplace program. We—evaluators and the program director—believed that the purpose of the evaluation would be both formative as well as summative. Through a careful and detailed accounting of the program's progress, a coherent internally valid understanding of how and why events occurred as they did could be reached and could aid the program staff in improving its implementation as they went along. At the end, we would also have a detailed history of the program rather than isolated statistics without explanation as most program evaluations do. This would allow us to discuss cogently the project's successes and determine with precision those areas where improvement might be needed.

We viewed the evaluation as an unfolding process where all participants' views—student, staff, and partners alike—were equally important for determining its achievements and difficulties. We believed that in order to evaluate this program, it would be necessary to document its development as it progressed. We should stress that all of the names of individuals, places, and organizations used in this paper are pseudonyms. The following is a list of the methods that we used:

- Participant observation and field notes of classes: because taping was not allowed, two observers were present in fourteen out of sixteen classes. The remaining two were observed by one researcher only.
- Participant observation, field notes, and audio recordings of meetings: at least one researcher was present in advisory board and planning meetings.
- Interviews with students who stayed, students who left, classroom personnel, and with various partners (i.e., community college officials, management, and union representatives)
- Document collection: grant proposal and handouts from class, from meetings, and from student portfolios.

The goal of the evaluation was to understand what happened in the program from the perspective of those involved in it. The central focus is the class itself. We participated in the class as note takers—during whole class and small group activities; as tutors in one-on-one interactions with students during reading and writing assignments; as occasional translators for Spanish-speaking students; and as participants, often doing the same assignments as the students.

As part of evaluating this project, we were interested in assessing student progress. Conventionally, progress is measured by giving pre- and post-standardized multiple choice tests like TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) and CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) to students. However, the program director felt that these conventional tests were inappropriate for this project because they were irrelevant to the content of the program and because they are generally disliked by the adults that are required to take them. Standardized tests such as these present decontextualized items, are given with time constraints, and their results are used to identify areas that "need

improvement." In a program that intended to provide support and encouragement to its students, the program director believed (and we agreed) that it did not make sense to use procedures that underline inabilities rather than strengths. The need to use a different approach to student assessment emerged and we were asked to develop it. We suggested the use of an initial and final writing activity and student portfolios as a way of monitoring progress. We also depended on our first-hand knowledge of what went on in the classroom and our observation of student participation in discussions and activities as sources for documenting student abilities.

Our intention was to develop an activity-based evaluation that was similar to other class activities and that was embedded in the context of class. We designed initial and final activities for the pilot with the understanding that they would have to be improved, modified, and perfected as the project went on. In developing these activities, we tried to uniform certain aspects of their implementation (e.g., the topic to be written on, the use of modeling by the teacher, and handing out a written description of the activity to students) so that they would be replicable in other courses. By the end of the grant period, we hoped to end up with a corpus of data from the ten different classes. Portfolios were to be used by students as a way of keeping track of their own work, as a vehicle for written dialogue with their teacher, and as a means of looking back and reflecting upon their writing. A reading portfolio was also suggested as a way of documenting students' reading activities and interests.

However, the activity-based assessment and the use of portfolios as we had planned with the staff never materialized. First of all, irregular attendance at the beginning and a high dropout rate left us with only two students who had completed both a first and last writing. The writing portfolio became a general folder where students kept things such as their handouts, notes, and work. Although some students began to bring in articles to place in their reading portfolios, the teacher did not follow through on organizing them. Because student assessment did not evolve as a central issue in this program, it is not included as a major discussion in this paper. Many of the students' writings and the teacher's comments, however, provided additional information concerning a number of topics throughout this report and are included when appropriate.

Our analysis of the unfolding history of this project took several forms. We looked for the most frequent and continuous topics of discussion among the staff, teacher, and

students. Topics such as concerns about teaching and learning, about class content and activities, about attendance, and about the educational model became the themes that focused our examination of the data gathered inside the classroom and collected through interviews and in documents.

In order to understand the program model, both as envisioned and as enacted, we looked closely at the planners' assumptions, stated intentions, characterizations, and goals and compared them to what happened throughout the program. We sought to explain how the project took shape and how the original vision was transformed in practice, and we analyzed the different roles that evolved among the program staff. Because the model in question involves a teacher, a counselor, and a student peer forming a "teaching team," we needed to understand their roles and relationships. To accomplish this, we needed very detailed information of how staff members interacted with each other and with students. (For a longer discussion of the model, see the following section.) We also looked at the relationship between the staff and the students, paying particular attention to what went on in the classroom. We studied the documented classroom talk for interactive patterns, and the characteristics of teacher-led lessons and juxtaposed them to talk initiated and controlled by the students. Because taping was not allowed in the classroom, our analysis of student-teacher interaction is based on handwritten field notes by two observers. We used those events where there was considerable coincidence in turn taking, context, and wording. In a few incidents, the analysis was based on single notes taken during small group interaction where the researcher was able to take down most of what occurred. Because of this obvious handicap, our ability to capture other important paralinguistic cues (Gumperz, 1982) was severely limited. Only the most obvious uses of emphasis, intonation, and gesturing were noted. As a result of the tape recording ban, many events were only partially recorded and others were missed altogether. Where we have quoted from interviews and classroom notes, we have taken the liberty of standardizing grammar and usage to facilitate the reading of spoken language.

We examined the curriculum as it was developed; how it took shape; and what knowledge, events, or beliefs were taken into account when decisions concerning activities and sequencing were made. Finally, we chose focal students to follow in classes, interviews, and informal conversations. We looked for clues that might help explain their not continuing in the class or the ways that they chose to participate in class. We asked

them for their opinions about the program, what they felt worked well, and what and how it might be improved upon.

The IBHW Workplace Literacy program was an innovative attempt to create a learning environment tailored to the needs of working adults. We became involved in this project when the program director requested that we evaluate it. In the beginning, we collaborated harmoniously and received his enthusiastic cooperation in our evaluation efforts. But as things began to go wrong in the program, tensions between the project staff and the evaluation team developed. The staff argued that our presence in the classroom and our choices of methodologies were responsible for students leaving the course. They also claimed that the distortions in the model were the result of our presence and that we had changed the course of the program's history.

As evaluators, we took a qualitative research approach to understanding the project that we were trying to learn about. This required "being there," and we never pretended that our presence did not effect what occurred. Tensions between the staff of a project and external evaluators are a common problem, especially when a program does not go especially well. While we found many problems in the pilot, we basically believed—and continued to believe—that the project was essentially a good idea. We tried to be very sensitive to the fact that the program was doing something innovative and that there was not much experience to build on. We saw the emerging difficulties as part of the process. But we also saw that our role in this process was to point out what might be improved. This turned out to be painful for the project staff to hear.

Our presence was not objected to by the students who stayed in the class. In their interviews, students said that they had not really noticed our presence and that we were simply there taking notes. Many of the students that left the course willingly talked to us anyway, sometimes giving up their break from work to do so. Those students who the learning advocate and counselor talked to gave a large variety of reasons as to why they had chosen not to continue.

Taping became a particularly touchy issue between staff and the evaluators. During the start-up and pilot period, we were able to tape most meetings and individual interviews with staff and students alike. Students were given the option to refuse taping and on one occasion when we thought that the student did not understand that in fact she had an

option, we opted not to use the tape recorder. During this period, however, no taping of classes was allowed. As the pilot project finished and preparations for the next phase of the project began, many attempts were made by the project staff to limit our access to the program. We felt that these new restrictions seriously jeopardized our ability to develop an internally coherent portrait of their program and preferred to withdraw.

For these reasons, this paper describes only the first seven months of an eighteen-month grant period. We participated in the start-up and the eight-week pilot session for a program that was funded to run three more sessions with three classes each. Because we followed the first third of the program, this monograph depicts the start of a program and provides valuable lessons about the difficulties of workplace literacy in general and the difficulty of implementing a new program in particular. It does not, however, represent a final evaluation of the overall program.

THE MAKING OF A WORKPLACE LITERACY PROGRAM

In the Summer of 1990, IBHW, in conjunction with Elmwood Community Colleges, put together and submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Education for a National Workplace Literacy grant. In their proposal, they solicited funding from the federal government to implement an innovative model for upgrading skills and promoting literacy at the workplace. Concerned with issues of recruitment and retention in adult education programs, the developers of this grant advocated the inclusion of social support and counseling services for working adults who were seeking to upgrade their skills or further training. They argued that many adult workers' previous experiences with schooling were unsuccessful and unpleasant, making it difficult for them to enter new school-like situations. Once they do decide to seek further schooling, many fail to complete training programs. In their grant, they posited that in order for adults to succeed in educational programs, this program included a social support system "expressly to keep people in the program."

IBHW hired Ethan Levin to be the project director. They also had several partners. First, it included Support on Site (SOS), a local consulting firm specializing in the area of social and mental health services for working adults. Ann Stein was SOS's director. She was the consultant to the program and the main author of the model that IBWH planned to

use in their program. As part of creating the program's model, SOS would train support personnel and aid in curricular development. Second, it included the local community college system which was to provide teachers and institutional support such as credits for the students. Deborah, the teacher during the pilot session, had many years of experience teaching reading and math in a community college program for underprepared students. Like many teachers of adult students, she was originally trained as a primary school teacher and had later received an advanced degree and changed educational levels. Third, the IBHW enlisted the participation of the union local representing the majority of workers who would be invited to participate in the program. Local 196 would sponsor the program and aid in recruitment, while IBHW would provide office space for the program and coordinate the project. Finally, the program called for the cooperation of the management at Elmwood Medical Center, a private medical facility and one of the two major county hospitals. Management support was to be mostly logistical, consisting in providing physical space for classes, phone mail, and paid release time for participating workers. The grant provided a start-up period of three months, a pilot class period over the Summer, and then three twelve-week sessions of classes. During each session, three classes were to be offered, for a total of ten classes, including the pilot. Of those ten, three were to be specifically designed to meet the English language needs of workers who were speakers of other languages.²

The program planners argued that adult education classes were often irrelevant to working adults and that these learners required educational programs tailored to their needs. Using a mental health model, IBHW proposed the incorporation of a peer counselor into the program who would serve as support in the classroom and out. They also included what came to be known as the "Learning Advocate," a class member from the workplace who would act as a counselor for the other students. The teacher, the counselor, and the learning advocate were to work together on curriculum and classroom activities, forming a "teaching team." They theorized that this "model" would better meet the needs of working adults interested in upgrading their skills. In the grant proposal they stated,

key to the success of this program will be the social support elements built into several levels of the project. "Learning Advocates" (peers from the workplace), trained by Support on Site, will recruit participants, provide ongoing support for the students on the job and in the classroom, function as tutors in some classes and will participate in curriculum development.

²The original grant also mentioned the inclusion of workers from some convalescent hospitals in the area, but this did not materialize during the time that we were involved in the program.

(. . .) SOS will train the Learning Advocates and instructors and provide a counselor in each class as part of the teaching team. The counselors will be available at other times and contribute to the ongoing development of curriculum that is grounded in the needs of participants in the program.

The IBHW program also sought to address other issues of current concern for adult educators such as English language skills for speakers of languages other than English, job advancement, and certificate requirements such as the GED. They included in the grant several far reaching objectives such as

1. designing and demonstrating a job-related basic skills curriculum for health care workers;
2. providing workplace literacy skills for workers with limited English;
3. assisting workers in furthering their educational and training goals including referral efforts to GED or other programs;
4. assisting workers in upgrading their basic skills so they can advance in their careers; and
5. providing educational counseling and other support services to encourage enrollment and retention. (Citation not provided to preserve anonymity of study's participants.)

As mentioned above, IBWH believed that the success of this program rested upon the effectiveness of its model. It relied heavily on the ability of the support system to alleviate problems such as recruitment, retention, and completion that are common in adult education. The program was also ambitious, as are many programs. In its original planning, it hoped to reach immigrant workers and workers who want to upgrade their skills to do their present jobs better, as well as workers who want to advance in their careers. In meeting these multiple goals, IBHW stated in a handout that they hoped to "demonstrate the effectiveness of a *union-based education program based in the workplace* that includes a strong social support system and an integrated process of curriculum development [italics in original]."

As professionals involved in adult education programs and issues, the partners also expressed other interests in the program. The consultants from SOS hoped to accomplish

the effective implementation of the model that they had, for the most part, designed. They expected to see people doing things differently on the job as a result of their participation in this program. The community college hoped that the program would produce "something replicable" that could then be used for other programs at other sites. Management hoped that upon completion of the program employees would "come out of the program feeling that they had gained some knowledge that would transfer [to] their skills, their understanding of the work that they are doing, how to move ahead, and, perhaps, of what they are capable, also what they are doing and the ability to move into other positions." Similarly, the union local brought into the program by IBHW was glad to see a program that was "finally doing something for entry level people" that would help them move up. Among some of the partners, then, there was a shared belief that a program such as the one they were collaborating on would in some way support employment mobility, a belief, as it will be shown, that was called into question by students.

The Educational Model³

The model proposed for the IBHW grew out of SOS's experience working with dislocated workers who fared very poorly in retraining efforts either due to what Ann Stein, SOS's director, called "hidden illiteracy" or resistance to retraining. Through working with union-based programs and looking at training programs, SOS came to the conclusion that most workers left training programs because "they were terrible," an insight that has recently been corroborated (Grubb, Kalman, & Castellano, 1991; Sarmiento & Kay, 1990). Stein explained that one of the issues for SOS was

how to establish programs that were appropriate. It was clear and this is across the country, it was very clear that community college programs did not understand workers, weren't set up for workers and that was really one of the issues.

Stein, working closely with Elia McDonald from IBHW, developed what came to be known as "the model" for this program. It was based on several premises: (1) existing educational services available to workers are inadequate, (2) workers have special educational needs—psychological needs—that have to be met if they are to be successful in

³Most of the information concerning the model is based on two lengthy interviews with the SOS executive director, the main author of the model. We have also quoted her participation in advisory board and curriculum planning meetings.

training, retraining, or furthering their careers, and (3) mental health and support services must be included in workers' education programs. They also overtly advocated for reflective, critical learning and stated that students should play an active part in their learning. The program staff often referred to this as "a new way of learning." The SOS consultant talked about creating "a learning system that empowers" and stated that "what people think, what they feel, what they know can get brought out and put into a form, that is, a new form, that's what they're learning in the classroom." However, it will be shown that despite their pedagogical intentions, the implementation of the model proved to be most difficult due to, among other reasons, the program staff's own conflicting views of learning, language, and purpose.

Stein believed that workers have "internal" and "external" barriers to learning that must be dealt with in order for them to overcome their resistance to education and to succeed in programs. She defined barriers as circumstances, attitudes, or feelings that somehow get in the way of their learning. External barriers are part of their life circumstances—child care responsibilities, transportation needs, family problems, and so on—that lead to workers dropping out of programs, attending irregularly, or not signing up at all. They can also arise after the "worker turned student" gets started. In order to help alleviate some of the burden of "external barriers," SOS proposed including a counselor in the structure of the classroom. Stein gave examples of what these needs may be like:

one of the things that happens very often is somebody goes to school maybe ninety percent of the time [and] it can be a very positive experience when they [working adults] start learning and opening up. But what it's doing is changing the nature of the daily interaction and that sometimes feeds back into the family in a way that becomes destructive and the family in fact ends up putting pressure on that person to drop out. They liked 'em the way he was. They liked 'em just sitting there watching TV. So family problems develop. There may be other family problems that aren't related to the class that have always been there that are going to interfere. A child who is sick who needs a different kinda care. A child who is having different kinds of problems in school. So there's a whole social work counseling component to help people deal with the issues.

Stein believed that internal barriers to learning were caused by unfortunate previous experiences in school that gave workers very negative feeling about "themselves as learners." According to Stein, workers and teachers alike are used to passive roles of schooling where the student comes in and waits for the teacher to tell them what they need to know. This passivity is further "reinforced" by relationships on the job: a worker

arrives, the supervisor assigns work, and the worker does it. To begin to combat passivity, the model proposed to deal with this situation by teaching people "to learn how to learn," a notion common to much of the training and how-to literature. Carnevale et al. (1990) state, for example, that "productivity, innovation and competitiveness all depend on developing the learning capability of the work force" (p. 18).

While high stakes are placed on teaching working people to learn how to learn—for the purposes of both empowerment and higher productivity alike—it is only loosely defined. Smith states that "There seems to be a growing agreement that the keys to learning to learn more effectively are (1) increased understanding of self as learner; (2) increased capacity for reflection and self monitoring of the process as one goes about the tasks and activities directed toward learning; and (3) more realistic understanding of the structure of knowledge" (cited in Carnevale et al., 1990, p. 59). Stein, in a similar fashion, defined "learning to learn" for the health care program as being able to think about issues and possible solutions. She specifically advocated for "raising larger questions about what is knowledge all about," "challenging people to think not just to learn," and "rais[ing] learners' consciousness about how they are learning and what they are using what they are learning . . . to be aware of what they learned."

However, according to SOS, a major problem in ABE classes in general, and worker-oriented classes in particular, was that the teachers are not trained to work with workers. In one of our interviews, Stein pointed out that teachers, by trade, are concerned with getting through content and often are not sensitive to students' concerns or processes. In order to deal with this potential problem, SOS developed the role of the "learning advocate," a worker selected from the workplace to participate in classes and curriculum planning, and to help deal with student issues, as a way to help make the classroom appropriate for working people. The job of the learning advocate was comprehensive and considered "key" to making the program work. A handout at an early planning meeting described this role as follows:

- *Recruitment*

Recruiting members into the class will include helping members overcome negative expectations about the classroom, their fears, and their "shame." It will require more than passing out information. One-on-one recruitment, which may mean several conversations with individuals, will be necessary.

- *Retention*

Retention involves helping members deal with whatever barriers may be present that will interfere with the learning experience. This will involve checking on members who are absent, dealing with self-esteem and confidence, and helping members find help for any problems that might develop (including making referrals to the counselor).

- *Union representation*

This will involve advocating for the students in the class, helping the teacher keep the content relevant to the worksite, and addressing any classroom conflict.

- *Educational support*

The L.S.⁴ will assist instructors with classroom activities, enabling teachers to split classes into smaller working groups and providing additional individual attention to learners. In addition, the L.S. will participate in monthly curriculum development and teacher training meetings.

The teacher, the counselor, and the learning advocate formed the teaching team. The teacher was there to develop curriculum and lead the classes and the learning advocate was to be a peer of the teacher on the one hand, and to "mediate" between the students and the teacher on the other. It was the fundamental role of the learning advocate to keep the class appropriate and on track. The counselor was there to provide support services and to detect underlying processes that the teacher missed, and bring them to the class members' attention. The following transcription from a meeting is an example of Stein's integrated view of how it was imagined that this group would work:

The concept essentially is that people have barriers to learning, both internalized and external barriers. The role that the learning steward or the learning advocate plays in this [is social support] so that they have several different roles. One is that we can't assume that the teachers teaching this class will be so familiar with the workplace that they will be able to integrate that knowledge. So the learning advocate is there to help, in order to keep the curriculum work based and focused in a directed sort of way. They are also there to have that person there, that buddy as you described it, to talk to—I'm not really getting this and I can't get—your typical reflection is that I think I'm going to drop 'n quit you know because (. . .) I'm too dumb to be in this class or all the other reasons. The learning steward is to listen to

⁴The learning advocate was originally named learning steward but was changed as not to be confused with the shop steward.

that and to be able identify the resources that may be necessary in terms of child care, issues of housing . . .

Unfortunately it is very difficult in adult ed program where the form of instruction doesn't end up being appropriate for workers. So the learning steward may also be in the position to say, "I think that the way that you are presenting that is going over peoples' heads. In [essence] it is being able to monitor the learning process. And they'll be doing that as a feed back loop from students. So we'll be able to monitor that. So there will be a training session with the teachers and the learning steward so that they will be able to develop that relationship. The leaning stewards and the teachers will work together to shape the curriculum so that we're really establishing them as peers; they are each bringing a different expertise. In addition to the learning stewards, there will be counselors from SOS that will be able at the worksite both to make contact with people, both to make appointments with people either to meet either at the union hall, the workplace or the center . . . to deal with some of those internalized issues, those self esteem issues, feelings of powerlessness. . . .

Inherent in this model were several operational demands necessary for it to be carried into practice. First, because it introduces many players into the classroom, extensive training and ongoing communication was required for counselors, learning advocates, and teachers. The proposed peer relationship between teacher and learning advocate, for example, is based on both of them understanding the educational model, their role in it, the learning environment that the program wanted to create, and the difference of this environment from other learning environments. Second, in order for the model to work as planned, the staff had to have the ability to adjust to the concrete situations (such as the difficulties discovered in the workplace) as they arose. Third, it also required extensive communication between the SOS consultant and the program director so that they might work out how to deal with unexpected circumstances and the way that these changes affected their notions guiding the program. Finally, the model assumed a kind of teacher-student interaction not commonly found in classrooms.

But, as in many programs, what was first imagined on paper did not match the reality of the very complex challenge of establishing a new program. Throughout the pages that follow, we will show how these built in demands misplaced the students newfound opportunities for learning.

The Start-Up

During the start-up period, five major problems developed. Two of them arose between the IBHW and its partners almost immediately after the grant period began. Despite their earlier commitment, management at Elmwood would not agree to give paid release time to workers interested in participating in the workplace program. Similarly, the community college district wanted to withdraw because of budget cuts that had occurred between the time that their original offer to provide academic support was made and the time that the grant period began. A third problem arose centered on the lack of active involvement of the local union section in the program. A fourth problem emerged due to the complexity of the project and a lack of organizational structure, making communication among participating organizations and actors cumbersome and inefficient. Finally, the relationship between the workers and the union turned out to be problematic, creating a major obstacle for the program's acceptance among the workers.

Management's delay in approving release time for students and the community colleges' attempts to withdraw from the program turned out to be very costly for the IBHW program. The workers at Elmwood have a contractual agreement that allots them paid leave for education.⁵ However, management expressed that if the program was a "give away," employees were likely not to take it as seriously if it was on their own time, and agreed to pay for only half of it. Furthermore, because some of the potential participants of this program were "on call" employees, they were not entitled to the same benefits as permanent employees. This meant that arrangements had to be made so that "on callers" could also participate, and that entailed many weeks of negotiations. Schedules had to be worked out in such a way that classes would be available both for workers coming off a shift and workers ready to go on. For permanent employees, this meant being allowed to leave one hour early or arrive one hour late. One hour of class was paid for by the employer and one hour was on the employees' time. Only night shift on-callers were affected by the schedule, day shift on-callers were off by the time the class started. Night on-call employees were allowed to sign in late, but were required to make up the time at the end of their shift. This made attending class particularly difficult because their shifts ended at 2:00

⁵ The contract states that "After the completion of one full year of service, employees shall begin to earn paid educational leave at the rate of forty hours per year, accumulative to a maximum of 160 hours. Paid educational leave may be taken by full days or by hourly increments as time away from the job, commencing with the thirteenth month of service."

a.m. and they had to stay until 2:30. The negotiations were long and time consuming. They began in March and final arrangements were not made until the end of May.

At the same time, the community college, faced with new budget cuts, wanted to withdraw their support from the program. This would have caused it to be scrapped because the program depended on the community colleges to provide the salary for the instructors. They suggested to the IBHW program director that he teach or that instructors on staff be assigned to the project, but that was unacceptable to the project planners because of the model that they were promoting. By the middle of April, this was also worked out, only after the union intervened directly with high-level community college officials.

Despite the letters of intention to participate delivered to IBHW as part of the grant requirements, these problems nearly halted the program before it got started. Letters of intention and goodwill by those who signed them expressed authentic intentions during the grant writing period. However, details of the partnerships were for the most part left underdeveloped until the grant period began. The time that was invested in straightening out the partnership problems detracted from, and severely distorted, other planning activities that had been programmed for that time. Originally, the March to May slot had been set aside for organizing curriculum; finding a learning advocate, counselor, and teacher and training them; setting up an advisory board and calling its first meetings; and visiting the workplace for interviews with employers, workers, and stewards in order to conduct a needs assessment of the workplace. Many of these activities required working with the local union, "getting it to buy on to the project" (in the words of the program director) so that the project could be promoted from within the workplace. Even though this project was union-sponsored, it was still not a bottom-up project that arose from the rank and file membership, nor did it respond directly to demands expressed by workers. This project was developed in a top-down fashion, from union leadership. This meant that the program was not naturally perceived as in-house by the workers, and to make the model truly worker-centered as it was intended to be, it had to be embraced by the local, but most of all, by the hospital workers. The project director was very aware of the problems that this situation posed, especially for soliciting workers' collaboration in the planning stages. In an early interview, he said that the program needed to be seen as with the workers for getting information from the workers and that it would be best if they (program staff) were introduced by stewards: "No matter what we say we will be seen as employers; we need to earn the trust of the workers."

A further complication of this situation was the recent history of local 196 with its membership. Within the last few years, there was a major strike at Elmwood Medical Center that dragged on for several weeks. The main issue was a two-tier pay scale where incoming employees earned less than previously hired ones. This measure eventually drops the wages of large numbers of workers. As the strike lingered on, many workers left the picket line and went back to work, seriously dividing the workforce. In an interview, a licensed nurse told us,

Local 196 has a whole horrible history going back to the strike. That was one of the worst experiences that I ever been in . . . It was so incredible the things that we went through, you know, sleeping on the street, trying to make up for . . . you know, this is what we want and we have a right to have it. And people were afraid, you know I can't pay my rent, I can't pay my bills . . . We did work together to help each other. We gave dances to help raise money so that to pay some of the utilities and call your landlord and call the company that you are paying your mortgage to and you know and explain them that we were in a dispute and that we would make some type of effort to pay, that it should be settled soon. And the people walked back into that hospital, these were people that I had worked with and really liked. I knew that they had walked back into that hospital or never came out. I had to ask for an additional week off just to get my head together. Just to say I'm not going to jump these people. I'm not a violent person. It's hard to explain.

Other workers had other serious complaints about the union's performance at their worksite. They ranged from lack of presence to ineffectiveness. One worker complained that the union raises the dues but never does anything for them. The workers' relationship to the union, and the union's to them was a factor that was not considered at all in the early planning stages of this program. In fact, the program planners assumed that because this project was union-sponsored, it would be readily embraced by the hospital workers. Leadership from the IBHW assumed that a union-based program would automatically inspire trust on the part of workers and that it would also serve as an incentive for them to join the class. This turned out not to be the case.

The repercussions of the delays seriously altered the initial implementation of the pilot class. Most of the planning activities that had been scheduled for the start-up period were postponed until the administrative problems could be worked out. This meant that the learning advocate, a key figure in the program, was selected very late and received practically no training at all. Procedures for selecting the learning advocate were not worked out until the end of May, and then she was not hired until after the first week of

June. On-site visits to the hospital for the "needs assessment" were also postponed, not starting until the beginning of May. Consequently, curriculum was sketched out but not clearly defined before the class began, and the teacher had little opportunity to plan ahead. Additionally, the start-up of the pilot was pushed back a week from June 16 to June 25, making the pilot eight weeks instead of nine. As a result of this change, there were only three classes before the Fourth of July holiday, the relevance of which will become clear in the analysis of the first class sessions.

Although one of the priorities was to involve participation from the local union, this too was not as successful as was desired. A meeting was held in April with local union leadership, the project director, and Elia McDonald, the national education coordinator for IBHW, to try to get the local representing many of the hospital workers to "buy on" to the project. While high ranking officials were involved in procuring the agreements necessary to get the program started, representatives on the hospital floor—shop stewards and field representatives—were less involved. The field representative did accompany the program director on some walks in the workplace as did the steward who would eventually become the learning advocate. A representative from the union also attended the advisory board meetings. However, while they were present at some meetings during this period, they did not participate in other important activities. For example, they did not choose the sites for the project, these were determined by the community college. The hospitals had to be located within the community college's jurisdiction for them to be able to provide support. They also did not participate extensively in gathering information from hospital workers or promoting the program. The field representative accompanied the project director only once and early promotion activities such as interviewing individuals or meeting with small groups of workers were undertaken by the program director who was at times accompanied by his assistant. There was no union representation at the first class and they did not participate in any visible way in helping determine worker needs. The director also complained that the local union was not supporting his efforts during the Summer in the "leg work" such as finding learning advocates or dealing with management needed to have three classes running in the Fall.

Leadership was further confused by the unclear roles of the program director and the SOS consultant. As stated in the job description of the program included in the original grant proposal, the director, Ethan Levin, was hired by IBHW to coordinate curriculum development; carry out needs assessment and job skills analysis; direct evaluation and

assessment of potential participants; assess and hire instructors and learning stewards; direct staff training, educational counseling, and evaluation services; and coordinate program activities. However, Ann Stein, the SOS consultant and principal creator of the educational model, did not recognize the program director's decision-making authority and often undermined or vetoed his decisions by calling them into question in meetings after they had already been made public or acted upon. When Levin named a worker as a potential learning advocate, Stein stated that she reserved the right to make that decision. On another occasion when Levin wanted to go to the hospital and discuss the program with potential students, Stein told him not to, that it was the learning advocate's job. Although Levin was hired by the union, Stein did not consider him a union person and in her final interview stated that "there is no union person that functions in this program."

As a result of this situation, an awkward and often tense relationship developed between the SOS consultant and the program director. Stein developed the teacher-counselor-learning advocate idea and felt that only she had the authority to modify it. However, she was often unavailable or uninvolved with the operational aspects of the program. Levin was responsible for the everyday management and operation of the program and needed to be able to make decisions regarding students, staff, evaluation, curriculum, and so on.

Communication between these two parties fell apart. This was caused in part by both of them being pulled away at different times of the implementation of the pilot program. Stein was involved in several other projects that required traveling; Levin was called away by the union for at least two weeks to write a new grant and had to attend to personal business during the Summer session. This was further aggravated by their often conflicting views of their respective places and responsibilities in the program. Levin saw himself as *the* director and often told us explicitly that Stein was "not his boss" and he believed that he had authority within the project to make decisions. Stein saw him as inexperienced, and believed that she was the keeper of the model and that she should have been consulted on any issue that might somehow transform it. In her second interview, she commented,

Ethan has never run a program like this before. So it takes years of doing this to be able to anticipate the problems, to know what's coming down the road, so he doesn't have those years of experience so he's gonna spend a lot of time [learning]. So I think that's part of the problem. So the fact that there is no direct union person in there is part of the problem. The fact that

Ethan who does wonderfully—wonderfully deals with the details really, really well. Keeps it, you know, all the balls juggling kind of at on time. Gets it down on paper really well. But you can't look at the details and the overall at the same time. It's very very hard to do.

This situation lingered until the pilot class was over at which point McDonald came and temporarily took over the direction of the program. She appointed a local union official, Alice Stand, as her on-site representative. From that moment on, the program director reported directly to Stand.

Shaping the Curriculum

Any serious discussion of curricular development must recognize at least two important stages in program design: planning and implementation. During the first stage, a "planned" program of content, approaches, educational actions, and student activities are conceived which are carried into practice in the classroom. Before implementation, curriculum can be thought of as a theoretical construct guided by the planners' assumptions and beliefs about learning and education, its actors, and objectives. The process of implementing theoretical proposals in concrete situations transforms them into "live" curriculum. Rarely does a plan come to life just as it was conceived; it tends to be shaped by many factors: the day's attendance, the general mood of the group, emerging interests, unforeseen responses, and so on. From this perspective, curriculum is a dynamic concept, not a static construct of content, scope, and sequence; it includes all of the learning experiences that class members share. Curricular development that is responsive to interests expressed by students takes advantage of what happens in the classroom to shape future classes and activities. In this sense, planning a program involves resolving the tensions that arise between "planned" and "lived" curriculum. In this section, we will reconstruct the planning stage before the class actually got started, the underlying assumptions that would later guide curricular approaches and decisions. In the next section, we will look at the "lived" curriculum, how students, teachers, and staff interact in relation to classroom events (Furlan, 1979).

As noted, among the unpredicted difficulties at the beginning of the program was a delay in the curriculum planning. Originally, April and May were to be spent on programming activities such as on-site assessment, material collection, lesson planning,

and so on. Because much energy was invested in straightening out the release time issue, curriculum planning did not occur until five weeks before the first class.

The SOS model attempted to implement a classroom structure that would provide students with additional support, but it did not include a clear pedagogical plan. An important challenge for the IBHW program staff was to devise a curriculum that was harmonious with their model and compatible with their premises and views about worker education. Because one of their central concerns was to create an educational setting that was conducive to student involvement, the objective of the pilot class was "to develop curriculum, see how it works, test it out." In planning the curriculum, great emphasis was put on the specificity of the potential student population and how this class would be fundamentally different from other ABE, vocational, or job training classes. Ann Stein characterized this difference in the following way:

Workplace projects are different than community based projects. They're also different than community college projects. They're also different from ESL classes. Even though there are workers in all of those other settings, the fact that it is a work based program makes it very different (. . .). If we ask people to reveal something about themselves in the class (. . .) they are gonna be concerned about how that goes out into the workplace. So the kinds of things that people may feel free to talk about in a community college class where they're anonymous is very different than in a work based [program].

While it was assumed that conducting classes at the workplace would create special tensions for student involvement, it was also believed that placing a program at the workplace and using work as the basis of the curriculum would guarantee student participation because the subject matter would be relevant to their interests. They reasoned that learning new skills and procedures that would potentially lead to job promotions would surely motivate students to complete a course. The key to success from this perspective then was to design a program that capitalized on students' shared experiences and their knowledge of the workplace and to use them in a way that was nonthreatening and validating at the same time. The difficult question, of course, was how to transform this idea into content and activities for the classroom.

In the first advisory board meeting attended by the majority of the partners involved (SOS, IBHW program director, community college, Local 196, and Elmwood management), a discussion evolved on what those skills might be. The executive from

Elmwood General was explicit about what entry-level workers need to know how to do on the job in order to be considered for advancement. Her emphasis was on using written text as a resource for problem solving. The executive from Elmwood General says,⁶

Elmwood executive (EE): [getting back to] basic literacy, back to problem-solving skills, when you run into a problem on the job, what are your resources for solving them? When your machine breaks down, *you can read the manual*. There are things that you can do to address problems where now you have to go get somebody else. Go read up on it. You can look through the procedures and see if there's a procedure. You can leave a note for your supervisor.

(. . .)

Community College (CC): What I'm saying is that those have to be pointed out as problem-solving skills [to students].

Ann Stein (AS): Some of the problem-solving skills is being able to take a problem and break it down into a process so it's even more generic . . . it's really learning to learn.

(. . .)

EE: The employee who can do those things, who can write the note for the supervisor, who can go out and look at the manual and figure out a problem without having to ask is the employee who is likely to be promoted.

CC: Oh! I understand that! I just wanted to make sure that it [looking at manual, figuring something out without going to supervisor] was pointed out to them [the students], that they saw it as problem-solving skills.

AS: It's a good point.

IBHW: It's a really good point.

This exchange reveals important notions about a potential curricular focus of the program. The Elmwood executive states explicitly that one basis of promotion is the display of written language use in ways that are equated with initiative and independence, capacities that are not necessarily tied to any specialized training. She is giving the program designers valuable insider information about the way the workplace works, naming for

⁶ Interactions presented throughout use the following transcription code:

// // overlap, interruptions
(sternly) narrative and description to help explain dialogue
[leave me alone] researchers' comment added to clarify meaning
(. . .) pause, between sections, omitted data
(()) best guess at what was said

them the "skills" that are recognized and rewarded at Elmwood General Hospital and pointing out a way to make invisible promotion practices visible to the worker (Wenger, 1990). The representative from the community college understands that the importance of literacy practices such as using written language as a resource for problem solving by "looking in a manual" or "leaving a note for a supervisor" may not be so apparent to the students and that the program should make a point of making this explicit through the curriculum. However, Stein's idea that students need to be able to fragment, break problems down into "generic" parts, gives a meaning to the notion of skills different from that of the Elmwood executive or the representative from the community college. She is more concerned with the subtasks that might be involved in using written language, seeing the necessity to teach students to "learn how to learn," to follow a sequence of steps so that they can "figure out a problem without going to a supervisor" rather than seeing it as a holistic practice as the Elmwood executive and community college representative described it. Although the participants use similar words and phrases to express their ideas, they conceptualized seemingly obvious notions quite differently.

The above example highlights some of the varying views about learning and skills held by the advisory board members. Differences similar to these were also evident among the program staff. It will be recalled that in planning, the teacher, the consultant, and the director expressed that the program should be worker centered, active and participatory. In principle, there seemed to be agreement among them as to what each of these meant, but in practice their different understandings of what the curriculum should be emerged.

Student involvement was a high priority for all three planners and they shared a vision of the classes where students would contribute to classroom discussions and support each other in classroom work, a notion central to student-centered curriculum (Moffett & Wagner, 1983). The staff agreed that the way to achieve the participatory program that they envisioned was to make the curriculum relevant to worker needs. It will be shown, however, that they each had their own ideas about how to do that. The director, for example, felt that this was best achieved by soliciting information from workers and employers. In one advisory board meeting, he stated,

In terms of the exact focus of those classes, in terms of level, content, that's where the real shaping of this program is going to happen. And that's going to be in response to what people express, what employers express.

Stein, however, felt less confident that workers would be able to pinpoint what they wanted or needed to learn. The consultant was concerned with creating a learning situation in which worker/students had the opportunity to examine their labor condition. She often referred to this as "a new form of learning," different from other school experiences that the students might have had in the past. She described this difference in the following way:

People are used to going in and that's what they're looking for. You see they are looking for, I'm gonna come to a class, you're gonna tell me what I need to know. I'm gonna learn what I need to know and then I'm gonna know it. Which is very different than learning how to think and being able to have enough of a basis of an understanding, then to be able to apply it in many different situations. That's what worker based education has to be. It's not teaching people specific skills but teaching them the ability to learn those skills and . . . that has to be addressed and it has to be addressed even on the level of why people believe all they need to know is the skills.

She envisioned the classes starting with discussions about issues at work that students brought up and building onto these discussions in two ways. First, the learning advocate and other students would "move the discussion on" by posing questions to each other that would lead to a detailed examination of an issue. Second, the learning advocate would propose an activity as a result of that discussion. The activity could vary from writing a letter to a real or fictitious person, to developing a solution to the problem, or to outlining ideas:

When people got into talking about stuff at work (. . .) I would want to take that stuff and say OK, what do we know about this? And maybe outline it so that you verb . . . I mean you physically are looking about your ideas rearranged into some kind of order and then moving you to being able to state what's the real problem here and so then what's the solution and what kind of action would you take? . . . Put into a form, that is, a new form; that's what they're learning in the classroom.

For Stein, "worker-centered" referred to the analysis of "workers' conditions and their relationship to that condition." She saw "work" and issues rising from the class discussions becoming the central content of the course. She believed that the outcome of that process should immediately result in something usable on the job. "If they come out of here," she commented at a curriculum planning meeting, "and on their job can do something different by virtue of having been in this class, that not only gives them the concrete product that they want but it is a way for everybody else to see what you learn in that class." She conceived activity in the classroom as doing something observable like talking, writing, discussing, all of which are part of student-centered curricula. The

program was considered to be participatory to the extent that the students raised issues, directed the class, and organized class work, which are student-centered notions as well. She believed that these activities would lead to evidence of critical thinking on the job such as filing grievances or writing memos to superiors. Situations that required worker/students to act individually were considered to reinforce passive authority-subordinate relationships. Given the importance of the learning advocate in the IBHW grant proposal, it was this player and not the teacher who was given the key role for creating a classroom appropriate for the model. Stein stated,

The learning advocate needs to be in the role of being able to participate in discussions to take it a way and move it . . . towards what are we gonna do about it? So when the issue is that the field rep needs to come here, right? That's when I think the classroom has to become, and that I would hope that we would have learning advocates strong enough and confident enough in their skills to be able to turn to the teacher and say, I think this should be our writing exercise right now. Let's write a letter to the rep . . . let's write to some mythical person what the solution here is. Or let's just write out what do you think, if you could, if you could make all the decisions around this, what would it look like? Get them to write that down. That's learning.

The emphasis in this vision of what classroom life might be like is that learning occurs when ideas are given a written form. In Stein's view, dialogue is a springboard for writing, and only when an exercise is completed can learning be said to have occurred. The writing could be directed towards a "mythical person," therefore, making authenticity of the writing unimportant, and little more than an exercise. While talk and student choice are important, it is the "introduction of writing that is believed to give precision to verbal analysis" (Tuman, 1987).

Even before the start of the official grant period, the program director expressed that he did not believe in completely setting out the curriculum before the classes began because he needed to meet and get to know the students. He proposed that the focus of the curriculum would be an issue (e.g., "your rights on the job") and that skill development would vary from student to student. Contrary to Stein, for Levin, dialogue and the exchange of ideas were the keys to learning, and he believed that at the beginning a great deal of emphasis should be placed on oral communication. He thought that students would come in expecting to be "filled up" but emphasized that the classes should center on their experiences and knowledge. He proposed using the concerns raised in his conversations with workers and stewards as the basis for defining the content and selecting materials for

the class. He was surprised to find that people raised work-related issues but not skills that they wanted to learn to do their jobs better:

Look at the conversations I've had with people. They don't bring [work] up. They bring up safety issues, issues with the union, they bring up issues with job advancement and access, these are political issues. Nobody has sat down with me and said what I need is to read and write better so that I can be a better coordinator of the laundry room.

He too was concerned with creating a learning environment where students would actively participate. However, he proposed accomplishing this through the organization of activities such as mural newspapers, interactive journals, and group publications where students could enhance and further develop their skills and literacy abilities. He also proposed developing research projects for students so that they would find out more about their workplace by gathering information about different jobs and the uses of reading and writing at work. He saw the program as participatory to the extent that workers were consulted about their interests and needs in the planning stages and continually invited to have a say in the direction that future classes might take.

Deborah, the teacher, expressed yet a third point of view about student participation. She believed that student activity included not only brainstorming, writing, discussion, and proposing, but also included moments of individual grappling with ideas and working alone. She believed that mental activity, although not observable, was activity nevertheless. While she embraced many of the consultant's ideas, it posed important operational questions for her as the teacher:

And it's a dilemma that . . . if you think that what you need to do is have these passionate articulations of what's going on, how do you connect that to the studies?⁷ And if you, you either have to cut it off and say, thank you very much. Or you know, we'll work on it or you know do something about that as a union activist outside of the class or incorporate into the study somehow. And if you already have a plan to do something then you either have to forget your plan and use what you have to create something or again put it aside and go back to what you plan to do. And I think that she may have the expectation that you can constantly have eruptions and then constantly write you know write what you're feeling and never move on from that.

⁷This term was used by the learning advocate to refer to her notion of academic work and coined by program staff. Its significance is discussed in a later section.

The teacher also advocated for an active, participatory program. She felt that student participation consisted in helping collect materials, suggesting ways of doing things in the classroom, expressing opinions, and helping make decisions about lessons to come. But she felt that preplanning was important, as well as following through on those plans. Issues from work helped her choose materials and topics, but she felt that those materials served as a context for emphasizing reading and writing skills such as overviewing, skimming, and scanning; index use; filling out forms; memo writing; text revision; and so on. Before the start of classes, she proposed a list of themes and planned to use them to teach skills. With the program director, she developed a double entry grid that would serve as the basis for the curriculum (see Appendix A).

Several of the assumptions about workplace literacy programs presented in the introduction surface in the discussions that we have just presented. As many proponents of workplace literacy programs suggest, several partnerships were formed by the IBHW as a way of securing resources and support for the project, but these turned out to be problematic on a number of levels. After agreeing to participate, management tried to modify their commitments and the community colleges tried to back out altogether. The local union was, for all intents and purposes, absent during this initial period. Personal and professional frictions developed between the program director and consultant. All of these unforeseen problems had important repercussions for this project, as we have already described. While partnerships may help pool resources, smooth working relationships are not guaranteed simply by the sharing of common interests as has been suggested.

Many of the partners assumed if the students learned the appropriate problem-solving skills in a class, it would be a step towards employment mobility. The hospital executive even pointed out certain practices that are highly rewarded at Elmwood. But we will show that the program leaders did not pursue this lead, and lost a valuable opportunity to take into account an important characteristic of the workplace that they were operating in. At the same time, they tried to determine what would be relevant class content for "workers-turned-students" by performing "needs assessments," and found out about what some of the issues at the workplace were but did not discover specific skills that workers felt that they needed or that they wanted to learn. While this provided the staff with information about conditions at the workplace, it did not help them to delineate content for the classroom. In pages to come, we will show that the decisions about the curriculum and course content resulted from a variety of considerations concerning teaching and learning

rather than the results of a single planning action such as the needs assessment on the part of the program staff.

Also present in this initial stage were the views of key program players concerning participation, skills, and learning. While they all used these terms, they had different meanings that often reflected conflicting theoretical positions. For example, Deborah wanted to emphasize skills such as skimming and scanning or using a table of context, and considered work-related materials to be an appropriate prop for pursuing her objectives. Stein was concerned with students learning to "break problems down into generic processes," an approach where learning is equated with the mastery of individual skills. In general, ABE programs and skills are similar to the ones that are commonly found in most classrooms: finding the main idea, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary building, and so on. But in the world of work, skills are tied to specific uses of written language at work and are often known as tasks (Askov et al., 1989; *The Bottom Line*, 1988; Carnevale et al., 1990; Philippi, 1991). Tasks (such as memo writing) are broken down to subtasks (such as dating the memo, directing it to the appropriate person, stating the topic, and developing the issues). Thus, the suggestions made by many to carry out needs assessments, to scrutinize and catalogue job-related literacy tasks, was a practice clearly embraced by the program director. Learning is to be monitored by immediate feedback and application on the job, thus assuming that a linear relationship between literacy improvement and job performance can be drawn. Stein was also concerned about feedback, and she referred to it as "being conscious of learning" and "reflecting on learning." She also stated on several occasions that her criteria for knowing that learning had occurred was that students could do something new or different on the job.

Yet their visions of classroom life contained other elements such as reflection and student participation. These ideas come from another theoretical paradigm where learning is "a dynamic process in which learners make connections between their background experiences, materials, and real life situations. Teaching is a dynamic process in which learner and teacher engage in dialogues and learn by listening and interacting with one another. They share their wealth of knowledge about the world, raise questions about facts and opinions presented and become sensitive to factors and interpretations that give new meanings to familiar ideas" (Soifer, Crumrine, Honzaki, Irwin, Simmons, & Young, 1990, p. 5). Levin's ideas about participation incorporated this notion, too, so while on the one hand he attempted to define skills needed on the job, he suggested collective

activities that would promote collaboration in the classroom and create a context for student participation, interaction, and learning.

Stein, Levin, and Deborah were all concerned with safeguarding student participation and all of them emphasized its importance in their views. They seemed to believe that discussion facilitated learning but that individual knowledge in the end was the result of learning isolated skills. This helps explain why Stein could say on one occasion "it's not teaching people specific skills" and state on another "problem-solving skills is being able to take a problem and break it down."

The program staff was clearly caught between two incompatible paradigms.⁸ The first, and most prevalent of the two, sees learning as a process of summing up discrete parts (skills or tasks) to conform a whole, and the other views learning as a process of understanding the whole as a context for its parts. In the first case, the content must be fragmented and sequentially organized and so it must be predetermined for the students. It is assumed that learners will automatically reintegrate the discrete parts into a coherent whole, and so no attention is given to this part of the process. In the second case, learning evolves from "giving new interpretations to familiar ideas" and so students are encouraged to engage in discussions, and class content cannot always be predicted. As we shall see, these different views lend themselves to distinctive classroom organizations which in turn provide a frame for particular kinds of participation.

TEACHER TALK: THE STRUCTURE OF SKILLS INSTRUCTION

While the staff's goal of a worker-centered, participatory program was certainly commendable, it was easier to plan such a program than to actually carry it out, particularly when there were numerous agencies and staff members actively involved. In the previous section, we described the difficulty with which a delicate and precarious alliance was orchestrated between the various program participants in the IBHW program. In addition, we reviewed the many and often differing understandings of "worker-centered" and "participatory" that were revealed by staff in planning meetings. In this section, we will describe how this planned curriculum was enacted in the classroom, that is, how it became

⁸ For fuller discussions concerning the different conceptualizations of literacy, see Lytle and Wolfe, 1989; Salvatori and Hull, 1990; Venezky, Wagner, & Cilberti, 1990; "Literacy in America," 1990; Sticht, 1988.

"lived" curriculum, noting how the problems that were budding in the early months of the project bloomed in the classroom and influenced the progress of the course. We will begin our description by overviewing the class and focusing on the main topics and activities. We then proceed to look closely at scenes of classroom life, highlighting first the teacher and then the students in an effort to differentiate between teacher-centered and student-centered interaction. We will examine the teacher, her ideas for lessons, and how they were actually carried out. We do not wish to single out this teacher as a particularly good or bad teacher, but to illustrate how common assumptions about language and learning influence teaching. The teacher was well-meaning and committed to facilitate student learning in the way required by the model and Ann Stein's vision of learning, yet she seemed to lack the resources to do so and thus lost numerous opportunities for innovating her teaching. Instead, she fell back on more traditional interactive structures, thus restricting student participation.

Classroom Content: Topics and Activities

Class met for eight weeks on Tuesdays and Thursdays from four to six in the afternoon. The total number of class hours for this session was thirty and for the twelve week sessions it was forty-eight, a short amount of time considering the overall ambitions of the program. In a seminar room with a panoramic view of the city twelve floors below, students and staff sat around tables arranged into a square. A memo board was always nearby, as were snacks, supplied first by management, and then by students and staff.

Talk constituted the most important activity in the class. It was used in all classroom situations for discussions, for "direct instruction," for organizational purposes, for group work, for support, and for personal interaction. As in other situations of social interaction, talk is a key element in moving from one situation to another and is a component of many other activities such as reading and writing, playing board games, sailing, sharing a meal, and so on. We will also show that it is the vehicle of enacting social relationships, organization, and power in the classroom (Cazden, 1988; Erickson, 1988; Mehan, 1979).

The beginning of the class was usually a discussion.⁹ During the first seven classes, a member of the teaching team made an opening statement about the class or asked the group a question that in some way was related to the course itself. In the first classes, for example, the program organizers talked about the class, its purpose, and asked students to present themselves and give their purposes for being there. In the classes that followed, students were asked "what things have you learned in this class that you apply to your job?" Student reactions to these questions varied. When asked if they were applying something they learned in class on the job, for the most part they sat silent or said "I haven't applied anything" or "Not yet." On one occasion, the learning advocate mentioned that a reading on health and safety hazards that had been handed out in class had circulated among many workers and been commented on widely. But for the most part, students did not answer the question.

It soon became evident that only a few people had opted to take the class. When this happened, the counselor was concerned that everybody else's decision not to continue would be "demoralizing." She then introduced a second question: "Why have people dropped the class?" Students offered a variety of answers (discussed in "Dealing with the Issues"): they named classmates who had decided to save their educational leave for community college, others who were sick that day but might return, others who did not think that they would learn anything from the class, and so on. The students who stayed did not seem concerned that others had left, and made comments such as "They didn't give it a chance" or "The people who want to come are here. . . . The advantage is that there are less of us and we learn more."

Besides talking about why people were there or were not there and what was applicable to the job, students were often (approximately 50% of the classes) asked to react to the day's activities at the end of class. They were called upon to state what they had learned, what they found new or interesting. They were also asked to give their advice about what should or should not be included in the course that was being planned for the Fall and to distribute questionnaires to their coworkers. As a result, one of the most important topics of discussion in the class was the class itself.

⁹ There are three classes that are an exception to this pattern. In these classes, there is either an activity that people begin to do as they come in (such as filling out the registration form or free writing) or the teacher starts off by picking up where the last class left off.

From the beginning of the course, students were invited and encouraged to talk about work in class. In the earliest of classes, discussions concerning issues about paid educational leave were extended to include concerns and complaints about working conditions, management-worker relationships, benefits, health and safety, discrimination, union-member relationships, and so on. Students were asked about some of these issues, and the topic of likes and dislikes about their jobs was used for soliciting an initial writing sample.¹⁰ Students, for the most part, seemed eager to talk and/or listen to talk about their jobs and many were very knowledgeable about company practices and regulations, had practical suggestions about how to solve problems, and expressed an interest in reading the contract and understanding underlying issues.

The teaching team, it should be recalled, was there to assure that students' interests were bridged to class activities and that activities were relevant to workers' needs. This became a difficult enterprise because, at least in part, the teacher, counselor, and learning advocate equated needs and learning that was "applicable on the job" with learning skills. As a result, a split between class talk about work—where students were initiators and active participants—and developing skills—where they were neither—slowly developed until they were completely divorced from each other. At the beginning of the eight-week session, attempts were made to bridge the talk and the skills work, but at the end the teacher tolerated talk about work while she waited for her turn to teach skills.

In the first part of the course, the teacher made an effort to build on the students' concerns and discussions. In the fourth class, for example, a long discussion initiated by one of the students concerning her duties led to more general concerns about health and safety issues. The teacher made the transition to her plans for the day by saying "What I'd like to do today is start with some writing [by] taking advantage of this conversation. I've heard details and proposals (writes "details" and "proposals" on big pad in front of class) What were some of the details?"¹¹ This led into discussing memos and who students might address them to. Later transitions, however, were less subtle and several, especially in the second half of the course, were actually quite abrupt. As early as the halfway point,

¹⁰The writing sample activity, which we developed as part of the student assessment piece of the evaluation, was originally a more open topic that allowed students to choose an incident or story from their lives that they wanted to share. This theme was vetoed by Ann Stein because it was not work-related and the like/dislike theme replaced it.

¹¹It should be noted, however, that previous to the teacher's transition, the counselor attempted to end the students' discussion of work issues by saying "Let's move on." The teacher looked for a smoother way to move to a writing activity by trying to give meaning to memo writing as a way of pursuing student issues.

the teacher began to distinguish the two separate parts of the class. After a lengthy discussion led by the counselor about "the new way of learning" and why people may not be coming to class, the class was turned over to the teacher who began by saying: "Hi! What I'd like to do is group reading," even though the class has been going for well over twenty-five minutes.

The difficulty in creating a curriculum where work is academic content was further aggravated by the lack of understanding on the part of the teaching team and students of this intent. Some students saw the ongoing discussions about work as a waste of time. Cathy, for example, noted in her first interview that "people talk too much. I don't really like [it]. You know sometimes I feel like [it's] a waste of time because my time is so . . . important to me. I spend two hours in here and then drive backward and forward so I want to get something in two hours, so I don't want people to talk so much."

The learning advocate referred to the skills part of class as "the studies . . .," a term that was adopted by the program staff to refer to what is traditionally considered to be basic skills, school-like content. When a guest speaker came to the ninth class to address the issue of AIDS, the learning advocate introduced him and then added, "Today we will be listening to him. So we just lay our studies aside, [lay aside] our learning." The teacher was genuinely horrified to hear this. She jumped in and said "NO!! This *is* part of learning, part of the studies. On Tuesday, we'll write a memo, we'll send it to him [invited guest speaker]." Unfortunately, the idea was never followed up on and a golden opportunity to connect the skills that students had been practicing with how they are used in the world was lost. In a later class, there was a lengthy student-initiated exchange about management's rules for employees taking a day off for their birthday. The counselor set the stage for a transition to the teacher's lesson by saying, "We need to move on now. Back to more class sorts of things."

The separation between discussions about work and "class sort of things" created two classes in one. There was a part that was student-centered/student-initiated and a second part that was teacher centered. The gulf between the two became so wide, that by the end of the course, Deborah did not consider the discussions as a part of the class at all. In her summary of the classes, she systematically left out the student-initiated discussions from her descriptions of classes 12, 13, and 14, and began her listing of those days' activities with her planned openings.

The teacher's activities centered on writing and revising a memo (five classes), overviewing written texts (three classes) and medical terminology (two classes).¹² In teaching each of these, she consistently used reading out loud, paraphrasing ("say it in your own words"), defining words, examining graphic display (e.g., use of bullets, italics, indentation, position of subtitles, and so on) as procedures for "reading." Isolating, defining, pronouncing, and breaking down words was constantly used for working with both oral and written language, and constituted the most frequent activity that teachers and students engaged in (80% of classes). One complete lesson was dedicated to "teaching procedure for reading in a group" which included "(1) Reader reads sentence 1; (2) Discuss unfamiliar words in a sentence; have the reader paraphrase the sentence he just said."

Writing in class included filling out questionnaires, forms (registration form and writing folder form), and worksheets. While all of these activities included oral language, talk in this case was restricted to verbalizing written texts, answering teacher questions, and reading handouts.

Even the group revision of the memo was highly structured and procedure centered. The teacher gave long elaborate instructions to the students on what to do, and students were not allowed to begin to revise until 5:15. The only "unstructured" writing were the free writing and the journal writing, but Deborah assigned these only a couple of times in the fourth, fifth, and eighth classes and then they were dropped. In all cases, free writing was a short activity, used as an opener or as a transition exercise. Journals were distributed in the fourth class and discussed in the fifth as a student introduced topic.

This approach to teaching language, be it oral or written, is grounded in the widespread belief that language is learned through accumulating bits and pieces that the learner will eventually put together into a coherent whole. This vision is common to skills-driven programs (Askov et al., 1989; Philippi, 1991; Taggart 1986) where complex processes are presented as a series of fragmented parts and sequenced from "easy" to "hard." Earlier or easy steps are to be mastered before harder ones are undertaken. This

¹²The breakdown of classes in terms of teacher's principal topic/activity is as follows: Class Business, introduction, farewell, filling out registration, questionnaire (three classes), memo (five classes); reading in groups (one class), overviewing (three classes), medical terminology (two classes), and guest speaker (one class). In each of these classes, other minor activities were included such as free writing, planning the class party, and so on.

step-by-step approach was also present in teacher-student interactions. She often told students when they answered a question incorrectly to "go back to number three" or "go back to the beginning." Many times she would present an idea and before she allowed students to begin work on it she would say, "I want us to share rough drafts, get responses and get revising. But before that I want to explain what revising is about." The explanation of revising lasted forty-five minutes, included several sets of instructions, and left students barely twenty minutes to work on their texts. The following example is a segment of another class where the teacher "guides" student reading of a handout on paragraphs step-by-step:

Teacher: Let's move on. Take out your rough draft. Give people a chance who didn't get to work together. Go into small groups. Before we do that, go back to information, read [handout] (handout from previous class). Who wants to read?

Marie: I'll read. (reads from handout) "Some pointers on paragraphs: 1. A paragraph is a few sentences that go together because they are all talking about the same subject or topic. Grouping sentences into paragraphs helps you think about what you are trying to communicate in your writing. Paragraphs also help the reader understand and think about writing."

Teacher: In your own words.

Marie: When you read out loud, you have to think about it. (rereads to self moving lips) Umm

Teacher: Sentence by sentence.

Marie: Just what it says. Not jumping around, staying on the //same subject//

Teacher: //why is// . . . putting together in paragraphs helps [read] what you wrote . . . who ever reads it to follow it.

(. . .)

Teacher: When you read, how do you know it's a paragraph?

Marie and Consuelo: Indent.

Teacher: Do you know where that word comes from (writing on pad)

Consuelo: (points to her teeth)

Teacher: She's pointing to her teeth. Where else?

Marie: Dents, in cars.

Teacher: I think of like it [taking a little bite out], sort of manners to show the reader [where your paragraph starts.] Who will read number two?

Consuelo: (reads) 2. To show that you are starting a new paragraph, indent the first word of the new paragraph. This means: don't write the first word for the new paragraph at the left hand margin. Instead, leave a space (about the size of a thumbnail) from the left-hand (sic) margin, and then start writing your paragraph.

Teacher: (referring to a typo of hand "had") Anyone see an error?

Lois: Hand.

Teacher: How do I fix that?

Lois: "N."

Teacher: Number three, who will read?

Yolanda: Come on, Tere (Teresa).

Teacher: Number three, who will read?

Yolanda: Come on, Teresa.

Teresa: You read.

Yolanda: (laughs)

Teacher: Read it together. Read the first sentence.

Teresa: Yeah, first.

Teacher: No, you read it.

Yolanda: (reads number three) "Each of your paragraphs should include a sentence that tells the main idea of the paragraph. This is called the topic sentence. Frequently, the topic sentence is the first sentence in the paragraph, but it doesn't have to be in the sentence. It can be in the middle of the paragraph and it can be the last sentence in the paragraph."

Teacher: Stop. What does it mean?

Teresa: I have an idea but don't [know how] to explain.

Teacher: Do you want to ask a question about some words?

Yolanda: Main idea, lo que quiere decir, lo más importante.

Teresa: More important.

Teacher: Can you say what it means in Spanish? If you want, say it in Spanish.

Teresa: (re-reads to herself. Consuelo coaches her in Spanish)

Yolanda: What do you have to say?

Teacher: When you write a paragraph, what do you have to say?

Yolanda: Have to write something specify (sic).

Teacher: Right, say what it is.

The teacher took a step-by-step approach, having students read out loud and paraphrase each paragraph that they read. She pointed out words to them and when a student hesitated before she gave her answer the teacher asked if there are words that she didn't know. Evidently she believes that the students could not read this without her coaching or that they could not use it as a resource in their revision groups without having reviewed it "sentence by sentence." From this lesson we see that to the teacher reading was a word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence process.

In reading, the teacher emphasized forms. For example, she noted that the paragraph was recognized because it was indented. She even went so far as to see if the students had picked up on a typographic error in her handout, and if they knew what the correct spelling would be. In this exchange, the teacher monitored the participation by telling students exactly how to proceed ("sentence-by-sentence"), when to stop, and who was to read. She was in control of the interaction and of people's participation and used her authority to pick topics and determine important points. In the process of doing so, she shaped the brand of literacy to which students were given access. In this class, students were taught to view knowledge in terms of steps and forms: the way to do things and what they must look like, as if these were truly singular.

Here is another class where indentation was discussed. In this class the teacher instructed the students in "overviewing" or looking over a text. This time the student wanted to know about indentation:

Cathy: What is standard for indentation?

Teacher: Three or five spaces on first line.

Cathy: But I want to know what is it.

Teacher: (looks uncertain.)

Lois: Can I answer that?

Teacher: Sure

Lois: It's five.

The teacher was uncertain because she knew that the size of an indentation depended on how many spaces the author or graphic designer of a text wanted to give it. Some books use larger indentations than others, some business letters do not use any. Some story books may use half a line. The point is that "indentation" changes and that the author or creator of a text has the authority to make these kinds of decisions. The only stable rule might be that indentation in a text be uniform. But the teacher did not share this knowledge with her students. Furthermore, she did not reveal the fact that it really does not matter, and that it is arbitrary. The learning advocate, however, believed, like her classmate, that there was a set rule, and she told her classmate what she believed was correct. The teacher allowed a student to say what she dared not to. Once Lois said "five," the teacher proceeded to introduce a new topic.

Why were students limited to such a narrow view of written language? In part, it can be explained by the teacher's belief that reading is a bottom-up, piece-by-piece process and writing a matter of form. Her approach to language teaching was "skill-driven" an expression she used in the second of her interviews. She defined skills as "paying attention to how you do [something]," thus explaining her concern for teaching steps. Skill-based approaches emphasize determining student deficits and providing carefully sequenced exercises that require mastery of pre-ordered contents.¹³ While Deborah did not assess student abilities, she assumed student incompetence and carefully laid out steps to follow, led students through those steps, and insisted that they show proficiency to her satisfaction before she allowed them to go on. In examples in this and earlier sections, she has been seen time and again reminding students of steps and asking them "what does it mean" and telling them to say it "in your own words." Simply asking students to define a word does not make it meaningful for the students. Meaning is made when students are

¹³In a discussion of the importance of assessment in a remedial program for youth, Morris, Strumpf, and Curnan (1988) ask, "What is the best approach for assessing basic academic skill *deficiencies* among JTPA [Job Training Partnership Act] youth? (emphasis theirs).

given opportunities to use words for their own purposes, connecting them to previous knowledge and experience, and reinterpreting them through such.

There are serious drawbacks to a skills approach such as this teacher used. First, reading (and language in general) is assumed to be a matter of efficient information processing where every minute item is given priority over making sense of text. Students are asked to look step-by-step, word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence. The teacher's approach is an extension of pedagogical practices that conceive naming letters and "sounding out words" as early reading. In contrast, Frank Smith (1982) has pointed out that fluent reading is based on the ability of the reader to predict meaning by using knowledge about the language system, previous language experiences, and knowledge about the world.

Second, a skill-driven approach assumes that students will reintegrate the small discrete parts back into a coherent whole, and that this reintegration is automatic. Words can be put back into sentences, sentences back into paragraphs, paragraphs into longer texts such as memos, essays, or stories. But what are these longer texts put back into? They belong in the realm of human intentions and interactions: people reading text written by somebody else or writing to others at a given time, in a specific situation, and for some reason. As Dyson (1989) points out, written language does not just represent meaning, it has social consequences. The whole of literacy is social practice, not the sum of unconnected skills. Redefining literacy as a social practice implies that learning how to make sense of the ink printed on a page includes understanding its context of use and recognizing the socially appropriate ways for responding to it.

As a result of the teacher's understanding of literacy, students were fed written language piece-by-piece, bit-by-bit. To use Meek's (1988) terms, they were never trusted with whole texts, and much less with ideas. Despite the fact that a variety of written materials went through their students' hands over the course of the eight weeks, they *did not read any text* in depth, from beginning to end, for its contents. When the students read out loud, the teacher assumed that they would not understand, and insisted that they "say it in their own words." Work with readings in this class was limited to their form, organization, and the words that they contained. They "overviewed" the contract and the health and safety materials, rather than reading its contents, and an intriguing paragraph by Herbert Kohl, filled with reflections on learning, was used to teach the procedures for

reading in groups, rather than as a basis for developing comprehension by relating the paragraph to their own experiences as learners, particularly since five of the six classes previous to this one the students had read in groups. Students were aware of this shortcoming. In an interview, Marie noted,

We never did go into one specific thing; we just did the table of contents, the index, and these questions that she had. And I think that it helped but I think that it would have been more beneficial to get one person's problem which would have helped all of us because if you can solve one person's problem then the solution to that problem helps somebody else maybe solve their problem.

The program planners' belief that the adults coming to this class would be illiterate and unschooled placed even more constraints on the teacher's choice of classroom activities. She viewed the students as deficient, unable to handle the complexity and flexibility of written language use. She talked in interviews and meetings about her students and how sad it made her to see "how far they had to go." This view was shared by other staff members such as Ann Stein who advised against students writing name tags in the first class because they might not be able to or might be embarrassed about their handwriting.

The teacher and program consultant are not alone in their beliefs. It is a widespread and common notion that underprepared students (Hull, 1991; Rose, 1989) at all levels have limited language skills and are disadvantaged, at risk, and intellectually incapable (Flores, Cousin, & Díaz, 1991). Adult education students have been referred to as "disabled," "deficient," "handicapped," "low-ability," "low achieving," and thought to be "embarrassed about themselves" (Carnevale et al., 1990; Chisman, 1989; Sticht, 1988). While we are not arguing that all adults are literate enough or are not in need of further education, we think that it is important to point out that viewing adult workers from a deficit perspective has important implications for the brand of educational efforts that they are offered. While their reading and writing skills may need improvement, judgments about their skills do not automatically transfer to their abilities or intellectual capacities (Hull, 1991).

Participant Structures in Classroom Interaction

The data we will present in this section on classroom interaction was analyzed from a sociolinguistic perspective, examining particularly what Philips (1972/1985), and others since her, have called the "participant structure," that is, the rules of interaction in a particular context: who says what to whom and when. Like Mehan (1979), we found that the participant structure often followed a conventional pattern of teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation known as an IRE exchange. The initiation is usually in the form of a question and the evaluation tells whether that question was answered correctly or not.

What is interesting about this interaction pattern is the "E" turn, as it is what distinguishes teacher-student talk from everyday conversation, which Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) have found to follow a fairly regular Initiation-Response-Initiation-Response pattern. An evaluation of an initiation and response pair cannot happen unless the teacher already knows the answer or has a preferred answer to her question, thus limiting the students' participation. Mehan (1979) and Cazden (1988) have noted that evaluations do not always occur at the end of every IRE sequence. Often they are held off until the end of a topically related set, that is, a group of interactions on a single topic, which is concluded with a teacher evaluation and initiation of a new topic. We found this to be the case in much of this teacher's discourse.

In this next section, we will examine typical interaction sequences in which the teacher apparently attempted to involve students in discussion and interaction but which resulted in student contributions being nullified in one way or another in the course of the interaction. One typical interaction in this class we have called the "guessing game." In this interaction, the teacher typically started a lesson by asking an open-ended, apparently "real" question (in that she could not know the answers students would give), taking student responses to that question, then moving to an exercise through which a skill or series of skills would be taught, often without validating or recognizing and taking into consideration student response. The following example illustrates this interactive pattern.

When the teacher introduced one of the first reading lessons, she stood at the front of the class next to a note pad with a felt pen in hand. She began by saying that today they were going to do some reading and then asked the students, "what words come into mind

when you think of reading? I'll write them down." Students gave a variety of responses: books, magazines, 'rithmetic, sleepy. The teacher wrote each one down without responding until one student said, "Imagination." At that point she looked up and asked, "What does imagination have to do with reading?" The student responded that some books, like fairy tales, are imaginary. Without comment, the teacher added "imagination" to the list. When students were apparently finished she announced, "I want to bring up now what I think of when I think of reading: Noticing." She then wrote it on the pad and continued: "This is what I am going to push you to [do], to push you to notice what's on the page you've written or somebody else has. Here I want you to experience noticing things." The rest of the lesson was spent pointing out, "noticing," different orthographic and organizational features of the text such as the use of bullets, subtitles, paragraphs, and so on.

In this example, the teacher went to rather elaborate lengths to get student input about reading, not only asking for their ideas, but also writing them up on the note pad. She did not evaluate each individual student response, rather she waited until all of the students who wished to had spoken, then implicitly evaluated their responses through her own response to the question, "I want to bring up now what I think of when I think of reading: Noticing," and then focusing the rest of the lesson only on her own response to the question, clearly the "right" answer in this case, never discussing the students' responses at all. The effect of this was to directly negate what the students have said, to invalidate, and to exclude, although the ostensible goal was to include them. Asking for student participation at the beginning of lessons in such a scenario began to seem like a gimmick of sorts, rather than an honest attempt to explore their views and understandings in depth.

In another example, the teacher was reviewing the format for memo writing, with an outline of the format on the board. She asked,

Teacher: "Re:" what word in the reading goes with this word?

Student 1: Subject?

Teacher: No.

Student 2: Notice?

Teacher: No, no.

Student 3: Regarding?

Teacher: No.

(pause)

Student: Topic?

Teacher: Yes. What's the topic of yours?

The reading referred to in this example was a photocopy of a handbook on health and safety for hospital employees. The word "topic," however, was not in that reading; it was on the teacher-created handout designed to have students describe various parts of the photocopied pamphlet. It had been five days, however, since the class had looked at the reading the teacher referred to. The reading had not been discussed in class on this day until mentioned in this dialogue by the teacher. Students did not have the reading out of their folders in front of them—they had been talking about writing.

Despite these constraints on students' abilities to make sense of the teacher's question, their answers made sense considering the fact that her question is about "re" on the memo. One student provided the word for which "re" is an abbreviation, "regarding." Another student provided a synonym, "subject." A third student provided the teacher's favorite word during reading activities, "notice." Yet, the teacher rejected all of these answers outright because they were not the precise word she had in mind. She did not even use them to provide any hints in her guessing game, telling students if they are "hot" or "cold" in their responses.

Question-asking was an important part of teacher discourse, a way of eliciting discussion and testing student knowledge. In this class, sometimes the questions were so broad or the context so unclear that what ensued between the teacher and her students can only be described as some sort of guessing game. Unlike authentic questions that are asked to open a topic for exploration or to direct a discussion, the questions that Deborah the teacher, asked were aimed at either having students repeat an answer known to all, guess an answer known only to her, or prepare a setting for her lesson. This restricted use of questions limited the students' opportunities for participation as well. These questions reduced possible answers to one or two words, a characteristic that will be present throughout the teacher-directed talk. Furthermore, answers lent themselves to instant

evaluation, putting students in the position of being wrong. As a result, participating became a high-risk endeavor.

Another interactional pattern that students may have responded negatively to we have dubbed "school rules." Although everyone in the class was an adult, able to make choices about attendance, tardiness, leaving early, completing assignments, and the like, the teacher often treated students as if they were young children who had to be taught not only the academic content of the course, but also the importance of following rules and procedures that were set by an authority figure, in this case, the teacher.

Sometimes the teacher's directions sounded like those to a standardized test, controlling the exact moment when students performed each part of the task she was presenting. In her initial directions for the memo-writing assignment, the teacher wrote an outline of the structure of the memo on the board, already providing a structure for the assignment:

To:

From:

Re:

Skip a Line

A. Explain the problem in great detail

B. Suggest solutions to the problem, in great detail.

But then the teacher said, "On your paper, *write the date now.*" She walked around the horseshoe-shaped grouping of tables to check students' progress, answering a few questions on the way. When Cathy asked, "Do we need to write a title?" The teacher responded, "*Don't start yet.*" Statements such as these that attempted to control student behavior are among those we have called "school rules." There did not seem to be any apparent reason for her to prevent students from beginning, except perhaps for her belief that they were unable to accomplish the task without her direct guidance for each step.

Attempting to assign homework and make-up work was another type of "school rules" to which students responded negatively. For example, Wilma, who had missed the previous class, was on her way out the door when the teacher called after her, "Wilma,

over the weekend do you want to do some writing?" This was the teacher's way of asking her to make up the writing assignment she had not completed since she was absent last time. Wilma responded, "No." The teacher said, "OK." Then Wilma said, "I'll try, " but continued to head towards the door, without asking what kind of writing she should do. The teacher said, "OK, so you have something to work with [in class next time]." And moved toward her with papers describing the assignment.

The teacher often disregarded valid student knowledge, often about the hospital or health care, because she was so intent on her predetermined answers to questions and the overall direction she had in mind. This disregard for student knowledge was usually displayed either by ignoring student answers and comments that did not provide the answer she had in mind or by directly negating or countering them. The following example is of the teacher ignoring valid student knowledge, using both these types of interaction.

Throughout her career at the hospital, Marie had worked in many different clinics and settings. Besides internal medicine, she worked extensively in gynecology and obstetrics, pediatrics, and family planning. Although she was not a registered nurse, she had learned to do many of the things that they did and performed those duties that did not require a license. She assisted physicians in some procedures, took turns as the advice nurse, and had access to confidential information about patients. She was familiar with many types of laboratory procedures and medical terminology, and was often called upon to train recently hired RNs on hospital procedures. She also had a great deal of knowledge about the inner workings of the workplace. Yet the teacher rarely turned to her as an expert or a resource. In fact, she often ignored Marie's participation in class. In one class, for example, we documented five direct exchanges between Marie and the teacher, all of them involving the teacher interrupting, "countering," or ignoring Marie through a false start. In the following example, the students are taking turns reading out loud a handout on medical terminology. The teacher is having the students focus on words and how they are put together. They are working on the word "electrocardiogram" and have spent a few minutes talking about what the machine and printout look like:

Teacher: When you think of record, what do you think of?

Marie: The accuracy or beat of the heart.

Teacher: In real life. I think of a record from a record player. Maybe I'm too old-fashioned. They've been replaced with tapes and CDs.

Marie: It's obsolete.

Teacher: When else have you seen the suffix "gram"?

Marie: Echocardiogram.

Teacher: Not medical terminology.

Marie: Telegram.

Teacher: What does it mean?

M: Over the wires.

Teacher: Tele means far, gram means record, a record from far away.

Marie was very competent on her job: she had a great deal of responsibility, made decisions all the time, and worked constantly with language, yet in these exchanges she did not get any of the answers the teacher had in mind. Her first response was contextualized by the ongoing discussion of electrocardiograms, yet the teacher responded with "in real life" as if Marie's answer were irrelevant. Then the teacher went on to give the answer she had in mind, in a manner similar to other guessing game episodes. The teacher asked for another word with the suffix "gram," and Marie gave "echocardiogram." Marie's answer was not accepted a second time. Marie then gave the word telegram, and the teacher asked her to define it. When she did, she was once again corrected.

The following is another example of the teacher directly "countering" student knowledge. During a lesson when the teacher led a discussion about organization in preparation for revising their memos, a student anticipated that the teacher's point was that, like buildings, essays too had shape and organization. Here the teacher referred to the words "shape" and "organization" written on the notepad.

Teacher: The first word is shape. What do you think of with shape?

Consuelo: Square or rectangle.

Teacher: No, but what thing?

Marie: Buildings.

Teacher: OK.

Consuelo: Lights (the lights are square and rectangle).

...

Teacher: Next word is organization. What is organized?

Lois: Papers.

Teacher: Not about papers right now. How do you use the word?

In a similar situation, where participation was directly addressed and was in fact the topic of discussion, the teacher overtly vetoed student preferences. The teacher opened the lesson by announcing that each person needed to help decide if the class should "overview" the whole contract or read an article closely. Marie suggested that the group look over the whole contract quickly, but spend most of their time doing a close reading of some part of it. The teacher answered, "I really want you to use the worksheet." Another student, Yolanda, insisted, saying that the group was very small and that it was better to discuss the contract together so that at the end they would "all know the same." But the teacher was adamant about working in pairs and doing the worksheet. She ended the discussion by asking people to choose partners. During an interview, Marie looked back on that day and commented,

She gave us a choice but it was really like what *she* wanted us to do. It wasn't really a choice. She had two things up there, but then when Yolanda said well why, (. . .) since it's so few of us, can't we all (. . .) do something together and that way (. . .) you get more involved in it. I sort of felt pressured. I didn't feel nervous, but I don't like pressure and I shut down . . .

Like the previous example, a topic was apparently opened for student input, but, in effect, the teacher had predetermined goals and direction. As Marie suggested, this interactive pattern could lead to students withdrawing either in class by "shutting down" or by dropping out. The following case study of James provides an example of how the types of classroom interaction we have described in this section can affect a student in a class over time.

James

James was another student who did not finish the course, but who attended classes well past the "checking out" phase. He attended two of the first three meetings, then four more over the next four weeks. He stopped attending two weeks before the end of the class. On the days James did attend class, he was often late (we have at least three times in our field notes) as much as a half an hour. Once he was sighted in the hallway about forty-five minutes after class started. The teacher then ran into the hall and convinced him to attend class that day.

When asked what he hoped to gain from attending class, James explained, "I want to enhance my skill[s] and learn something new." James had taken classes previously at the local community college. Like Richard and most of the other students, he worked in housekeeping at Elmwood. He had worked there two years, but had yet to receive the benefits of a permanent employee, including paid educational leave. He was, therefore, attending class on his own time.

The following episodes of classroom interaction featuring James, his teacher, and his fellow students reveal possible interactional reasons why James stopped attending the course two weeks before it concluded. The selections for this discussion provide further examples of the type of interaction we observed throughout the eight-week course, not just with James, but with other students as well.

The first two examples reveal a lack of response to student answers to teacher questions, a disregard for student knowledge. In the first example, the class was being taught a method for reading in small groups. According to the teacher, an important part of such reading is restating what one has read in his or her own words:

Teacher: One of the skills we need to do this kind of reading is paraphrasing. (Writes paraphrase on the note pad.) What does "para" mean?

James: It's a prefix.

Teacher: What's a phrase? (no answer) Do you know? Let me explain. They are groups of words . . .

In this example, we see that the teacher completely ignored James's answer, continuing on a path of questioning that would lead to a definition of the word "paraphrase" that was on the note pad. James's answer, although it did not precisely answer the teacher's question, "What does 'para' mean?" did begin to answer it by suggesting that as a prefix it had a specific meaning separate from the root of the word, but that ultimately contributes to the entire meaning of the word. Since the teacher broke the word into prefix and root, then asked about the prefix without making it explicit that she had done so, James's response seems a reasonable one on the way to fully answering the teacher's question. In addition, the response reveals James's knowledge of word parts and their names, but the teacher did not acknowledge the value of this response in any way.

The second example of teacher-student interaction in the classroom was uncannily similar to the first in its failure to acknowledge direct student responses to the teacher's questions, and its failure to acknowledge student questions and comments on the topic of the question. In this example, the teacher asked students a direct question about the organization of a memo they were preparing to revise. When students, including James, answered her in a variety of ways, she either corrected or ignored student responses without providing any praise for their appropriate responses:

Teacher: We are going to redo [memo from two days before]. First we are going to read to help us. What do we mean by shape of writing? What's a paragraph?

Cathy: Group of sentences (teacher looks at her) put together . . .

Teacher: . . . about something. Paragraph is a shape of writing. [We] talk about writing as having a beginning, middle, and end. Some people call the beginning the introduction. And the end?

James: The finale.

Teacher: Well, in music and theater it's called that, and if you have a grand ending it's a finale.

Cathy: Conclusion.

James: It's the most important part.

Lois: But middle is the peak, no the plot.

Cathy: You can summarize what you said.

James: But the end is the most important part because it's what you remember the best.

Teacher: What about the middle? (No answers.) Some call it the body.

Marie: It's between the head and the feet.

Lois: What about plot? Oh wait, we're talking about writing.

Teacher: Body, middle, end, each has a different role to play. What I did here was make an outline that asks you to revise your memo. (Teacher passes out a two-page handout.)

This example, like the first, shows the teacher moving on to the next question without responding or evaluating the students' responses to her first question, "And the end?" While she did correct James, indicating that "finale" was incorrect, she did not provide the correct response, and when what would appear to be the correct response was given by another student, she did not acknowledge that either. In a third situation, the teacher asked each student to read aloud part of her written directions on a handout for organizing and revising their memos. James read the second paragraph:

James: "Use the following outline as a guide to shape or organize your writing. However, DON'T number the paragraphs of your memo."

Teacher: Would you put that in your own words?

(Silence.) (James looks at the handout and waits.)

Cathy: I didn't understand "Don't number." Not necessarily 1-2-3-4?

Teacher: What do you think?

Lois: No indentation.

James: I don't get it.

Teacher: (To James) Which sentence is causing the problem? One or two?

(Silence.)

The teacher then asked a series of questions that got minimal responses from other members of the class in an attempt to get someone to restate the sentences James read aloud in their own words:

Teacher: Where's the outline?

Teacher: What does "following" mean?

Teacher: What does it mean to use the following guideline to shape your writing?

Teacher: What does it mean "Don't number the paragraphs of your memo?"

In this episode, the teacher asked students to use her "reading-aloud-in-a-group" method which required them to restate in their own words what was in a sentence. This caused considerable problems, however, when the sentences were the teacher's and their meaning to the students was unclear. From James's silence and "I don't get it" to other students' wild guesses at what the teacher wanted, it was clear that her direction not to "number the paragraphs" did not make sense. Secondly, even if they did understand why she gave that direction as part of revising a memo, it is a difficult statement to put in other words without changing or adding to the meaning. Rather than help James by explaining what she meant, or taking time to recognize the difficulty in finding another way to state such a simple declarative sentence, the teacher had students start to define and discuss each word in the sentence, revealing once again her belief that breaking reading down into more minute tasks will help students understand the task and carry out her directions. Of course, James and the other students knew the meaning of each word in the sentence; it was the teacher's meaning in using this sentence on a revision handout that had them lost, as well as her direction to restate the obvious.

James and the teacher also came to a stand-off over some of the arbitrary "school rules" that had been established in the class. The teacher had made a careful distinction between free writing and journal writing. Although the form and content of both were the same, the former was written on notebook paper and put in one's folder, whereas the latter was written in the notebook provided by the teacher and taken home. One day James came into class a minute or two late. Everyone was sitting at the tables, writing quietly. James picked up his folder, went to a seat and began to write in his journal, which had been in his folder. After a few moments, the teacher stood up and walked over to him. The following conversation ensued:

Teacher (to James): Here's some paper. You can write it on this and put it in your folder.

James: It's the same thing: free writing.

Teacher: The difference is you take the book home; you leave the paper here.

James: Can I run off more creative writing from here (indicates journal) to here (indicates paper) for my folder?

Teacher: Sure, but I'm not sure what you mean.

In this short interaction, the teacher corrected a positive act by this student (writing on his own topic without any direction from the teacher) by saying that he had done it wrong since he wrote in his journal rather than on a piece of paper. When the student followed up on the teacher's distinction and asked if he could put some of his other free writing into the folder, she suggested another flaw in the student, that he had not made himself clear. Rather than waiting to find out what he meant, she showed a lack of interest in the student's question and moved away from him back to where she was sitting.

An examination of James's case shows a number of examples of the invocation of school rules by the teacher to reprimand his behavior. She also insisted that he and Lois stay five more minutes at the end of class until the official end of the class period, even though one activity had just finished and five minutes was not sufficient time to begin their next activity: revision of a memo. She used the threat of homework, another formal school activity and traditional teacher mechanism, to make Lois and James stay until she dismissed class:

Teacher: Are you done? (A few laughs from other groups.)

Teacher: Start revision. Start rewriting your memo.

Lois: Me and James don't—

Teacher: What?

Lois: We got to go to work.

Teacher: Well, you don't have to go for five minutes, do you?

Lois: Well, . . .

Teacher: Do you want to do it at home?

Lois: Yes, ma'am (sarcastically).

Teacher: I'm asking you a question (apologetically).

Later, in the same class, we saw the teacher chastise the class for arriving late, saying "Can I say one thing before you split? I'd like to give encouragement to come to class on time. We keep starting later. We'd have more time in class if we started on time." And James responded, softly and guiltily, "I know, I know." This was the last day that James attended the IBHW Workplace Literacy Program. His case provides startling evidence of the types of interaction that occurred in this class and how they served to devalue student knowledge and ultimately devalue the students themselves. It also provides additional proof of the teacher's belief that teaching reading and writing is the teaching of discrete skills, the more basic the student is assumed to be, the more the skills are broken down.

The type of the interaction described here and the understanding of teaching and learning to which the teacher ascribed seem to feed one another. The IRE structure reflects the pedagogical philosophy apparent in this teacher's interviews and classroom interaction: the assumption that education occurs through information transmission and memorization rather than knowledge construction. The IRE structure requires material sufficiently reduced into its component parts that the creation of known information questions with short word or phrase answers memorized by students are possible. This educational philosophy, however, as well as the pedagogical methods it leads to, run counter to the intended educational goals of this program, namely a student-centered (rather than teacher-centered) class designed to empower (rather than disable) students through literacy instruction.

STUDENT TALK: THE STRUCTURE OF MEANING MAKING

As was discussed in the previous section, the teacher believed that students' literacy would improve if she taught them line-by-line, skill-by-skill. She approached literacy and learning as if they occurred in a vacuum, ignoring the ways that all language use—written and oral—is shaped by people. As a result, "the nature of the situation in which people do literacy is not thought to alter the nature of the process" (Resnick, 1990, p. 170). But the context in which literacy is used *does* alter the nature of the process and the literacy that people do (Erickson, 1988; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984; Wagner, 1988, 1991). The teacher assumed that all she was teaching was reading and writing, but, in fact, she was also teaching the students who they were in relation to these activities and

to other people who do them. If we think about literacy not just as skill but as practice, then learning is not just a matter of learning hierarchically ordered skills, but also a process of socialization, of becoming a literacy practitioner (Resnick, 1990). Literacy learning is situated in specific contexts.

In the examples in the previous section, students seem never to have quite the right answer. They seem unknowledgeable about reading and writing and how it is used. They depend constantly on an outside authority to tell them what to do, how to do it, what order to do it in, and if they have done it correctly or not. The teacher (and the counselor) doubted the ability of students to comprehend and asked them repeatedly to define words and paraphrase. As was pointed out earlier, they gave students few opportunities to talk about any text longer than a paragraph; when they did, they examined the drafts of their own memos with very restricted and narrowly defined instructions. Consequently, the students appeared unskilled and incompetent.

This is not to say that the students did not need to improve their literacy abilities. Students did need to improve and they came to the class because that is what they wanted to do. The point is that students were more knowledgeable than what they were given credit for. In structuring lessons, the teacher did not use the students' interests, needs, abilities, or uses for literacy to facilitate further development. She assumed lack of knowledge and directed them from that assumption.

Besides the structured lessons that we have discussed, the teacher also allowed long periods of discussion to take place. She also varied classroom activities by organizing students into small groups or pairs. During these less structured and less controlled situations, we were able to get another view of the students and their abilities. If instead of inspecting isolated skills we look at their literacy practices, a very different picture emerges. We saw or heard about many situations where the students were in control of how they used reading and writing, where they had authority over how and why they used it, and yet where they were aware of the social conventions and mores that shape written language use. They used reading and writing in their own lives when they found it required, useful, or necessary. In one class, the teacher asked them, "What was the last thing you wrote?" One student replied "a letter to my lawyer." They paid their bills, kept files of important documents, and received and answered correspondence. As the following example from our field notes shows, they were clearly able to make meaning from text:

Students were engaged in talk about a union letter that Wilma had in her hands. They commented on who had received it and who had not. "Oh you'll get it soon," Wilma said as she read it, "Looks like dues are going up."

James: I'm complaining already.

Wilma: Compare it to the contract (referring to letter size and text). When they want your money, they do it right [the contract was on smaller pages with very small print].

The view of reading comprehension here is much broader than knowing what the words say and mean or how to put the text in their own words. Here, students make meaning by relating to the text, to its authors, and to their purposes. They fit the content of letter into the context of their own lives by tying it to their own experiences with the union. Here, the issue is not word meaning but meaning in the world of these workers and their union, as part of their ongoing history (Britton, 1969/1990; Bruner, 1990; Rogoff, 1990).

In class, students showed an understanding of how to use writing for their own purposes. They often advised each other about keeping documents for the future, and keeping records of work-related illnesses and vacation time so that they could be informed if questioned by management. When Wilma confided that she was told by the doctor to purchase a treadmill so that she could exercise frequently, her classmates advised her to get a prescription for it so that it would be tax deductible.

Cathy was an immigrant from mainland China where she was a doctor. In the U.S., she was working as a nurses' assistant while studying to become a registered nurse. She had a notebook where she wrote different practice documents. Sometimes she brought things to class that she had written so that the teacher would "correct" them for her. She often had questions around some aspect of grammatical usage such as subject-verb agreement, pronouns, verb tenses, and so on. One day she volunteered to read from her journal, hoping to get some feedback on her writing:

Teacher: How's the journal writing?

Cathy: I wrote something. I wrote a contract to the roof contractor. I'm not sure his Chinese is so good. And a letter to my supervisor. It's a letter of resignation. (Reads her contract)

Teacher: Sounds OK to me.

Lois: Talk to a realtor. You need a warranty. They know how long a guarantee should be. I sure wouldn't want to spend \$2500 for a roof and then [have it leak]. Teacher, teacher, teacher, let's do it, too. We do like the teacher do (laughs).

The teacher said that the contract was "OK," referring to the syntax of Cathy's practice contract, but she made no further comment. She did not choose to elaborate on her student's writing, although she might have. Lois, however, did. She suggested to Cathy that she talk to an expert in these sorts of matters and that she make sure that the contract included a well-worded guarantee. She knew what happens with written contracts in the world and so her interest went beyond the immediacy of the class to the real use of this literacy practice in Cathy's life. Then, in a moment of reflection, Lois realized that she was acting like a teacher, posing a potential problem to Cathy, offering her constructive criticism, and suggesting a plausible resource for solving it: "Teacher, teacher, teacher, let's do it, too. We do like the teacher do (laughs)."

Students also displayed knowledge of language conventions and uses. In broader contexts they easily used some of the skills (e.g., word definitions, punctuation, and spelling) that Deborah wanted to teach them step-by-step. Here are two examples of the ways that this became evident to us. In the first example, Lois was explaining a needle-stick problem to Ellen and telling her how to use the verb "to stick":

Lois: Why don't you say stick? You say "it stuck" or "I got stuck" but if you say "it sticks," it's ((all the time)).

Teresa and Consuelo were still writing. Teresa asked Consuelo, ¿Took, qué lleva?

Consuelo answered "t-o-o-k."

Finally, students had many candid reflections about their reading and writing, and their skills, according to the teacher's definition. They were aware of the problems that they faced and how they tried to solve them. They were genuinely concerned with their writing looking right, their spelling being correct, and with understanding written language. One student commented,

Writing might be crossed and sketchy. I make mistakes and underline it, scratch through it, write above and below. Deal with the mistakes. That's the hard part. For me, I have to understand what I read and write to get [the] spelling.

Both the teacher and students were aware that the class members could improve their literacy practices and expand their knowledge of written language use. However, this is not the same as assuming that students were unknowledgeable, unskilled, or incapable. Our examples demonstrate that the students came to this program with a wealth of knowledge, experience, and literacy practices. Ignoring their assets was counterproductive to facilitating further learning.

Working Together

Although much of the classroom activity was overseen by the teacher, the use of small groups and partners provided situations for students to work together. Those situations where students were on their own were the most revealing of their knowledge and abilities as well as their efforts to learn. In this section, we will look at literacy as a social practice, situated in context, done by someone, for something, specific in function and form. We will also look at learning from the perspective of the meaning making that results from reinterpreting the familiar and interpreting the new. While we will see students displaying many skills, what is more important is that we will see students attempting to make sense of what they are reading and writing by connecting it to their personal experiences, something that was practically invisible during the teacher-led interaction (Britton, 1969/1990; Lindfors, 1987).

Doing a Worksheet with Partners: Working Together in a Highly Structured Event

Although they continued to follow the teacher's format, once students moved into group or partner situations, their talk became less controlled. In some of the group and partner activities, students worked well together and used the teacher's frame to help each other complete the assigned task. They were aware of how much they benefited from helping each other learn.

In the following example, people began to choose partners. At first, Teresa and Consuelo paired off and Ellen and Cathy were together. Ellen and Cathy wanted to split up because they were both speakers of Cantonese and wanted to work with a native English speaker. Wilma called to Consuelo and Teresa across the room and asked them why they

did not split up. Deborah wanted to know if they would be comfortable working with someone else when Wilma said to Consuelo,

Wilma: You come over here and be uncomfortable.

Wilma and Consuelo were doing number ten: Does a hazard affect you? (see Appendix B).

Wilma: If it's a hazard, it affects all of us.

Consuelo: (reading from her paper) Infections, exposed to diseases. It can be transmitted by skin punctures, by bacteria and virus . . .

Wilma: And blood.

Consuelo: Look (reads from handout) and fungi

. . .

Wilma: Infectious linen.

Consuelo: Did you put page? (checking up on her partner)

Wilma: Uh-huh. Twenty-one.

Consuelo: Now what do we put here? (unsure)

Wilma: Stress and burnout. Every time you put it [bedding], roll it or it's airborne.

Lois: (listening in from other side of table) You're right.

Wilma: Ain't been on beds a long time, but I know that it's airborne. All this is yes (i.e., does hazard affect you?)

While the teacher generally preferred that the second language students work together so that she could give them "special attention," Ellen and Cathy raised the possibility of splitting up so that they could learn from native English speakers. The teacher was concerned that they might be "uncomfortable," not able to do the activity or to understand. Wilma, however, did not see that as a problem and invited Consuelo, a student from Latin America, to work with her.

Although this activity was constrained by the teacher's worksheet, the students worked through it independently, doing several questions all at once, rather than following the given order of the questions. Consuelo read back to previous answers from the worksheet where they had listed the ways diseases are transmitted. She checked on her

partner's previous answer even as Wilma moved on to the next question. They used a variety of resources (e.g., each other's experiences, written text, and previous answers) to solve the worksheet. When they turned to their own experiences, the curriculum became, if just for a moment, student centered: their language became expressive, self-presenting, and self-revealing (Britton, 1969/1990).

For example, when they got to question number ten in the exercise ("Does hazard affect you?"), Wilma first defined "hazard" in context ("If it's a hazard, it affects all of us"), making her understanding of the question precise. Wilma then added "blood" from her own experience and Consuelo, reading from the handout, added "fungi." Wilma relied on her own experience as a housekeeper at the hospital to include "airborne" diseases and "infectious linen." Consuelo agreed. Wilma then returned to the question of whether hazards affect them, and she answered it "Yes," a conclusion reached with knowledge gained from the handout and her own experience as a worker.

Discussion in Revision Groups: Interaction in Less Structured Events

In the revision groups set up by the teacher for students to further develop their memos, the students followed the teacher's directions, but, because of the nature of the activity, were able to weave in their own experiences and purposes with the teacher's. They were given guidelines for what a memo should contain (introduction, description of the problem, solution, and conclusion) as well as instructions for revising their memo: "(1) What was strong and clear about the writing? (2) What could be expanded, added, clarified?" Deborah worked with one group of students while the other was on its own. Nancy, the counselor, usually functioned in one group as the teacher but on this day she had stepped out for a moment, only to reappear a little later. Because this example is lengthy, we present it in two parts:

Lois reads her memo (See Appendix C).

Lois: What I'm talking about is AIDS patients and that no cure like Tylenol or aspirin, taking aspirin, doesn't [make it] go away, can't say [there are any] drugs created that will cure AIDS. Number two will say I know who is here. [Lois then explained that the curtain pulled around patients was rarely laundered and often soiled with blood, stool, etc. She proposed that it get changed between patients or regularly washed.]

Marie: They ain't never gonna do that. What exactly is your point? Exposure to other patients? Acknowledging patient needs?

Lois: Our attention. Seein' their rights, not to deny their rights to our services.

Marie: (started to ask more questions. She started to read from the teacher's list on the chalkboard "What was strong and clear bout the writing? What could be expanded, added, clarified?): What //could you//

Lois: // Teacher's// way over there. Did you get all "A"s? When I'm in the corner, I'm over here. You're so picky.

. . .

Marie: How often do they change those curtains?

Lois: They paint more often than they change them. Every patient is entitled to depend on us. They are in our hands. We're their loved ones.

Marie: Is there a checklist? I'm asking for myself.

Lois: It says spot clean curtains.

Marie: Oooo! (displeased)

Lois: Gross, huh. Any patient with respiratory or AIDS problems, chicken pox or any kind of these germs (cough). We're backed by a "quarter person" [someone who does halls], spend more time on halls than people.

Marie: How often do they change those drapes?

Lois: I've been here since 1989, as of now, none. Clorox is supposed to be "off" [no longer used] at hospitals. Not used as often, but it's a good cleaner for part of substances that I'm talking about, although we do have germicides.

Marie: Solution (referring to memo) would be to change curtains. Are they washable?

Lois: It's inexcusable. So my subject is AIDS and my conclusion was cleanliness of curtain.

One difference between earlier examples of teacher talk and the student interaction here is the amount of talking that students were allowed to do. In teacher-controlled situations, students often gave one word or short answers. Their talk was restricted by the structure of the teacher's questions and purposes, as shown in the previous section. Second, and closely related to the first difference, is that in the previous examples, the teacher was in control of talk: only she had the authority to determine which topics were

valid. In this exchange, the students monitored their own interaction. They asked each other questions ("Have you ever got fluid on your clothes?"; "How often do they change those drapes?"), made suggestions ("Solution could be . . ."), drew conclusions ("It's inexcusable"), and accepted and rejected topics ("Teacher's way over there. Did you get all 'A's? When I'm in the corner, I'm over here. You're so picky").

The teacher was present by structuring the activity, and students at some points felt obliged to deal with the activity directly. But student structuring of talk was less restricted than the teacher's structuring, allowing for the exchange of ideas, information, and experiences. As a result, the opportunities for learning were broadened.

Lois read her memo and tried to clarify what she meant, what she wanted to add to her memo ("Number two will say I know who is here"), and then focused her classmates' attention on the problem of the curtains. Marie first tried to help her state what she meant with greater precision by asking "What exactly is your point?" Lois restated her concern that patients receive appropriate care ("Seeing their rights, not to deny their rights to our services."). Marie then reintroduced the teacher's agenda by reading the directions and restating what the teacher said. But Lois interrupted her, a sign of Lois's anger or disapproval. She maintained control over how her writing was going to be talked about ("Teacher's way over there. Did you get all 'A's? When I'm in the corner, I'm over here. You're so picky."). She found the teacher's procedure "picky."

The students continued to discuss Lois's topic of interest: the curtains. She felt a sense of professional and personal responsibility towards the patients ("They are in our hands. We're their loved ones."). Marie asked her about a checklist, an authentic question about the hospital for herself. Lois displayed her knowledge of her job by telling what the standard of cleanliness was and what the official checklist required, displaying knowledge of the written materials associated with her job. She then elaborated on where the "germs" that dirty the curtains come from, naming what she considers to be serious and contagious illnesses ("Respiratory or AIDS problems or chicken pox"). Using sarcasm, she then contrasts the time spent on cleaning the floor with that spent on what she considers to be important for people's health, and ironically noted that Elmwood "spend more time on halls than people."

Marie then asked about how often the drapes are changed. Note how Lois's topic received validation from her classmate and that she had been allowed to display her knowledge about procedures at the hospital on various occasions. Time and again she was given the opportunity to verbalize what she knew, what she believed a major health problem to be, and voice opinions about what she thought might be solutions ("I've been here since 1989, as of now, none. Clorox is supposed to be 'off' at hospitals. Not used as often, but it's a good cleaner for part of substances that I'm talking about, although we do have germicides."). The solution that Marie offered Lois on how to improve on her memo was given in the context of the discussion about the curtains. Lois participated competently throughout this exchange. Yet when she tried to use the staccato language of "answers," the wealth of knowledge already displayed was lost. In the section entitled "Teacher Talk," we saw Lois' struggle to make meaning out of the teacher's cryptic questions.

The students' discussion continued:

James: Mine is about hazardous waste, fluid on skin and clothes.

Lois: Have you ever got fluid on your clothes?

James: Over in the red room [surgery].

Lois: I hear what you're saying. You use scrubs?

James: Use to, don't anymore. I don't see why not.

Lois: Plastic costs seven dollars, cloth ones don't [cost more].

James: Back to square one.

Marie: Not worried about keeping your health.

James: They're worried about their jobs.

Marie: This used to be family place. People liked each other and cared.

James: It's gonna get worse. What can we do to reach 'em at the top when you work on the bottom?

...

James: I've been here two years. I asked when are we going to move up, become full time? They told me when the regulars leave.

Lois: They pit you against each other.

Marie: They got thirty-four "on-callers" [non-permanent employees]. When they have that many, they need to hire someone. One-thousand hours makes you permanent. Why don't you get it?

Counselor: Let's get back to the memo. This is important, but we need to get back to the memo.

James: This is important.

Lois: So your topic is about?

James: Infections.

Counselor: I noticed something when you're reading, you put it [the essay] down to talk about it. You know all the details.

James named his topic which was immediately validated by Lois when she asked James about his personal experience. The students commented on and discussed hospital spending policy, agreeing that cost effectiveness was more important to administrators than their health was. This was an important moment: students were thinking about a familiar idea in a way not exhibited before in this class. James realized that all would benefit if management would listen to their views, and he began to extend his understanding of this issue beyond his personal experience: he raised the question of how workers on the bottom might express their ideas to people at the top. James went on to explain his employment situation and his classmates immediately validated his concern. By this time, Nancy, the counselor, arrived, and she wanted to monitor the students' talk. Like the teacher, she did not hear the wealth of student knowledge being displayed, and tolerated the students' talk only until she could get them back on task. She exercised her authority to gain entrance into and take over the students' talk: "Let's get back to the memo. This is important, but we need to get back to memo." James resisted initially, and stated that what they were doing was important, but within seconds they were all playing school again, asking known answer questions ("So your topic is about"), giving one word answers ("Infections"), and waiting for a teacher evaluation ("I noticed something when you're reading, you put it down to talk about it. You know all the details.").

If we looked at the example of James, Marie, and Lois merely from the perspective of skills, it would appear that they *need* the counselor to act like the teacher to keep them on track. After all, when one of the students tried to do it, it was unacceptable to Lois and she spent little time following the teacher's instructions. But when we look at this exchange in terms of practice, what students were doing at the time, we get a different picture. When

the students were led through texts and discussions by the teacher, only certain topics certain types of fragmented knowledge (i.e., word meanings, paragraph structure, graphic conventions, and so on) were validated. Led by the teacher, they construct a context where they depended on her to direct the interaction and select what topics and knowledge was legitimate. When they were allowed to work on their own, however, they drew on their experiences, asked each other questions, focused on different aspects of a problem, and made understandings and meanings more precise. They constructed a context where they were the authorities, with the power to decide what to do or talk about next. Here we see literacy is constituted by its context of use (Erickson, 1988). The ways that reading and writing were employed were intimately tied with the interactive context and the purposes of those who were using it. It is important to note that when the students were told by the counselor that they needed to get back to the memo or when Lois wanted to end the discussion of her memo and she went back to the given format, they immediately fell into an interactive pattern quite similar to the teacher's. It can be seen from these examples that the students were not just learning paragraphs or word meanings, noticing, or any of the other discrete skills on which the teacher focused: they were learning how to act when reading and writing, who they were and who they could be around texts and other people who use written language. They were, as Wagner (1991) put it, learning the culture of literacy.

A Topic of Student Choice: A Takeover Event

In the final example, students took over the class. Not surprisingly, this exchange occurred during an "unstructured" part of class, a part dominated by students rather than the teacher. While in other parts of this paper we have described teacher control, here the students were on the other side of the fence. They set topics and controlled turns. This was a takeover in that the students usurped control from those usually in power in the classroom—the teacher and the counselor. The following example is lengthy, so we have presented it in four sections when in fact it was continuous:

Yolanda: I know that this is a class but sometimes I got to talk about what they are doing in housekeeping. Like if you are one minute late, then you are tardy. The union has to do something about it. It's discrimination; this only happen to housekeeping.

Marie: That happens in housekeeping.

Counselor: Has that happened to anyone else?

Lois: They have on the back (of the time sheet) about punctuality.

Yolanda: Last week I was late. I live in Fremont; there was an accident. (Chemical spill from railroad car) I (. . .) I was an hour and a half late. It's not my fault, what am I supposed to do? They tell me I'm late.

Marie: Why don't they have time clocks? You give more than you get paid for, that's why. The receptionists always leave at 5:00, they get off at 4:30. They have to turn in their money.

Yolanda: If you call in sick, they suspend you. Put you on the list.

Marie: For everyone to see.

Consuelo: If you are one minute late or two minutes late, it counts. Supervisor is going to give you a letter. In three months, I have been sick once, one tardy. I was five minutes late. Now they say that I get a letter.

Counselor: Which people do they do this to?

Marie: Housekeeping. It happens in nursing, too, but it depends. Some people are covered. Chemo nurses don't come until 9:30, 10:00. They cover for each other. I'm the only one who does my job. I have to be there.

Counselor: Why is it certain people, housekeeping, your job?

Lois: It's a power struggle for their own identities (laughs).

Keeping in line with the original intent of the class, Yolanda made a takeover move by changing the direction of the discussion and demanding to talk about a problem that she had at work. When she spoke up, she was not responding to a teacher question and was in fact initiating a topic, both of which were not favored in this class, given the typical participant structure of teacher/student interaction. This explains her caveat at the beginning of her speaking turn ("I know that this is a class but . . ."). Her classmates and the counselor accepted her topic. The counselor wanted to direct the discussion but no one answered her question about who else in the hospital might have a similar problem. Instead Lois referred to a written document that they were all familiar with: the time sheet. Yolanda elaborated on being late, giving a precise example of why she believed that the policy was unreasonable. Marie raised an issue that had been on the table since the first class. She believed that people always worked more than what they were paid for. Then several students mentioned the "list" and the "letter," two official uses of writing by management to reprimand workers. The counselor again asked her question about who

this was done to and Marie answered it. When the counselor asked why, Lois laughed as if the answer were obvious: "It's a power struggle for their own identities." The discussion continues:

Consuelo: If you sick, you can't take it.

Marie: It's a privilege [to take sick leave]

Consuelo: When you bring a doctor's verification, they still ask you [why you had to take sick leave].

Marie: Sickness is a privilege. Contract says third day, they want [note] from first day.

Consuelo: ().

Counselor: Anything you can do?

Lois: Letter of grievance. [Union] rep has to come out. Letter goes in your file. Hard to get it out. It's aggravating.

Marie: People don't complain.

Counselor: It's set up against you.

Yolanda: Sometimes I am so upset with the union, too (nods and yeahs from other students).

Marie: Me, too.

Yolanda: (The) union raises and raises (dues) and don't do nothing for us. During the daytime, no one to go to. This morning, I go to Jorge (and tell him) you owe me two days.

Consuelo did not pick up on the counselor's topic ("Which people do they do this to?"), instead she went back to the issue of sick leave, a topic that was introduced earlier by Yolanda. She and Marie pursued this topic, noting the difference between what the contract said and what the hospital practices were. The counselor then posed an open question to the group about what might be done, and Lois, who was both learning advocate and shop steward, suggested a letter of grievance, again displaying knowledge of a written document used on the job. She also mentioned that these letters go into workers' files and that it was hard to get them out. The counselor wanted to draw conclusions about the workplace as being unfairly structured but Yolanda directed her conclusions not to the workplace but to the union. She then introduced a new topic also related to contract issues and union representation: trying to collect days off that she has coming to her:

Lois: There is (someone). Every time the field rep puts it (a list) up, it gets taken down. She's gonna get a lock.

Yolanda tells a long story about trying to take her birthday off. In 1989 she had a baby and an industrial accident so she was gone a long time. She didn't take her birthday off until sometime in 1990.

Marie: Now management says she can't take her 1990 birthday off. You have to take it off, it has to be taken within a month.

Yolanda: Somebody tells me one year. I go to Joe (the director of housekeeping) but he cancels. I tell Jorge that I need to take some time off. He says he has to go through the book. So I want Mariann Jackson [the union field rep] with me. He's gonna get me drunk and dizzy and confused. (At the end he'll say I don't have any days.) He'll be right and I'll be wrong. She's supposed to be there, but she's not. She's never here. I call her and the secretary says she will return your call. I call at 4:00 and she not there. I just forget it.

Lois: Call, follow up on it.

Marie: She needs this Friday and Monday. At Elmwood it has to go with personnel. Just call in sick.

Lois pursued the union issue and informed her classmates that there was a rep available for the daytime shift, but the list had been taken down. Yolanda elaborated further on her situation and explained that Elmwood still owed her time for her last birthday. She then further exposed what her fears were: that she would not be able to defend herself with her boss, Jorge. Yolanda wanted the field rep to be there with her, but she did not believe that Mariann Jackson would show up. Lois advised her to "follow up," but Marie realized that Yolanda's time was short and suggested the official route: "call in sick."

All this time, the teacher and counselor were quiet as the students were discussing the issue of getting days off, an area that Deborah and Nancy obviously did not know. Furthermore, the students raised questions concerning what the union's role should be and, given the union's history of being unreliable, explored what alternative solutions might work. As they continued, the Elmwood versus union debate did, too:

Yolanda: I don't have any more days.

Consuelo: You get suspended up to three days.

Marie: Birthdays, you have to take them one month before or after.

Yolanda: The field rep says one year.

Marie: No, it's in the contract

Counselor: What could you do so (you don't have to go alone)?

Yolanda: It's going to be very bad for me to handle it. (He'll) go through my file and at the end I'll have no time.

Counselor: What could you do so (you don't have to go alone)?

Yolanda: The thing is, you know how supervisors are, (they) don't want to be wrong.

Counselor: What can you do to prevent that?

Yolanda: Nothing. That's why the union has to do something.

Lois: A shop steward has to be there. When he gets here, he doesn't come on time (. . .) Get control of not letting management intimidate you. If he says you have to go (into the meeting), go with a representative. Tell him you can't go in without someone with you. Before you know it, he wants you to rattle off in a hot headed way, become a ball of confusion. Workers need to remember to be heard in a way they, management, can understand. Control yourself; you have knowledge about your rights. Don't let him intimidate you.

Yolanda: He's not that way with me. He plays with me, and I play with him. (. . .)

Marie: What if you write it's an emergency.

Consuelo: They won't pay her.

Marie: Take vacation days.

Yolanda: I don't have any left.

During this time, it was the students who asked and answered questions for each other. They covered many of the official options for getting time off (e.g., vacation days, sick leave, birthdays, and emergencies). They discussed their difficulties when dealing with supervisors and what they think the role of the union should be. They saw the union as an important means of protection, yet at the same time Yolanda was not willing to characterize her boss as malicious towards her. She used her personal relationship as evidence of this. While in other situations Lois has seemed confused or unknowledgeable, here she spoke forcefully with specific suggestions and information. The counselor skillfully introduced a question into the students' talk without taking over their discussion

entirely. Her question helped them consider possible solutions. Within the context of this student-led interaction, the counselor's participation was also transformed so that she contributed to their discussion rather than rerouting it. During the discussion, several students participated and all contributed knowledge about their workplace to solving Yolanda's problem:

Teacher: What's your argument? You took 1989 birthday in 1990, not 1990 birthday?

Consuelo: Funny thing, before we had to apply. Why they give it to you? You have a pink slip.

Lois: We need (to be) strategizing.

Yolanda: One supervisor gave me a day holiday, said didn't have to check. Another supervisor gave me sixteen days again. Now they tell me I owe them sixteen hours. It comes out on my check. (Looks through purse for check stub).

Lois: My thoughts about sick leave (are that) workers should bank sick leave, use it all at the same time.

Marie: No, you can't. You can't take it. My coworker hasn't taken sick leave in thirty years. I told her, you haven't used yours and I have and when we leave they'll give us both the same thing, nothing.

James: It's unfair.

Consuelo: I had an accident. I never took sick leave, always called in absent [different from calling in sick] when I missed because of the accident. They said they would pay me first week, workers' comp paid the rest.

Counselor: People get sick and they need to use it.

Marie: Don't call in saying that your child is sick. Mostly women work in this hospital, single women, too. They need to do something about it. I keep a calendar (shows it to the class). I write in all my vacation time once it's approved. So I can show them.

Here the teacher and the counselor had an excellent opportunity to pull this discussion together and help students become aware of all the connections that they had made. They had come from Yolanda's complaint about work, the unfairness of tardiness rules, the uses that management makes of the "letter" and the "list," hospital policy on sick leave, sick children, union representation and availability, dealing with management, and so on. For each topic they had identified a problem, given evidence from their experience,

and proposed solutions, much in the same way that the teacher was trying to instruct them to do with their memos. Here, in oral language they were doing all of the things that they had been asked to do in writing. Yet, neither the teacher nor the counselor made an attempt to connect the two parts of the class. Instead, like in other situations, they regained control of the discussion by exercising their authority to impose an agenda:

Counselor: We need to move on now, back to more class sort of things. Before we do, did people learn things?

Marie: I learned about birthday time.

Counselor: (It's) important to notice learning.

James: I learn more and more how unfair they are; they have no regard for us.

Marie: It's always been like this for twenty-five years. They indoctrinate newcomers when they come to the Elmwood way. It's like being on a plantation.

By announcing that it is time to move on, the counselor regained control of the discussion. Then she reoriented the discussion with an additional instruction "Before we do" Overall, her conversational turn is reminiscent of the "false start" we discussed in regard to the teacher. The counselor, not a trained teacher herself, is also constructing knowledge. She is learning the teacher talk of Deborah. Students began to give "answers" to the counselor's question, and the teacher gave her approval ("Important to notice learning"). James gave his opinion and then Marie draws a provocative conclusion: "It's always been like this for twenty-five years. They indoctrinate newcomers when they come to the Elmwood way. It's like being on a plantation." The teacher and counselor, instead of pursuing her plantation analogy, "move on" and this exceptional opportunity for talking with students about economic structures, organizations, business, and a multitude of other important topics is lost.

The ability to exploit analogies such as Marie's requires a teacher who is knowledgeable about some of the topics that it suggested. But more importantly, it requires the ability to connect it to broader topics in a way that students can make connections also. Helping students see the relationship between their specific workplace or other aspects of their lives and other issues requires a different kind of pedagogical know how. In the absence of knowing how to interact critically and thoughtfully with students,

to listen to them and help them to explore their ideas as valid, interesting, and plausible, teachers are likely to revert to the known ways of "teacher talk."

DEALING WITH THE ISSUES

One of the central goals of the IBWH project was to create a program that addressed and resolved the low attendance common to adult education programs by developing a program that supplied the necessary support students need. The program developers considered that working adults need social support in the classroom and out in order to attend classes on a regular basis. In this section we will look at how certain program features played a role in student attendance. First, we will examine the attendance patterns and then look at how assumptions about student abilities and the role of work in a workplace literacy program influenced the students' decisions to stay or leave the course. Finally, we will look one more time at the teacher-counselor-learning advocate organization proposed by IBWH. We have already looked at the teacher in great detail, so in this section we will focus on the learning advocate and the counselor. Because this model involves people interacting, we must look at their roles, how they were enacted, and how they related to each other.

Checking Out Versus Dropping Out

As with most adult and workplace education programs attendance and retention became a critical concern for this program (Alamprese and Associates, 1987; Darkenwald, 1986; Sticht, 1988; Taggart, 1986).¹⁴ Analysis of attendance trends in this class reveals that there were two distinct stages in class attendance. The first stage encompassed the first three class meetings and the second stage was in the third week of class beginning with the fourth class. During the first three days of this pilot program, attendance was high (fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen students on the first, second, and third class meetings

¹⁴ In the first phase of the course, twenty students showed up (thirteen female and seven male; three Latinos; three Asians, twelve African Americans, and two whites). At the end of the course only six women were left and no men, three Latinas, two Asians, and one African American. Interesting questions can be raised from looking at these results such as "why did only women stay in the class" or "why did so few African Americans leave?" However these questions are not the focus of this paper, although we recognize their importance and their need to be asked.

respectively), then it dropped off to nine students at the fourth meeting. Seven students were regularly attending at the end of the third week, and attendance plateaued at an average of five students per class for the remaining five weeks.¹⁵ Three factors seemed crucial for understanding why students left this program: "checking out," the program planners' assumptions about student abilities, and the role of work in a workplace literacy program.

Discussions with students about why they stopped attending the course suggest that rather than interpret the loss of students between the third and fourth class meetings as student "drop out" statistics, we should consider them "check out" statistics. This term was coined by a student in this class who said, "I heard some negative and some positive about this program, but I don't judge anything before I *check it out* myself."

This interpretation is supported by the fact that during those first three class meetings, even though the number remained fairly constant, the clientele varied. Only eight students attended all three of the first meetings. In other words, students who attend one, two, or even three classes early in a course should not be considered totally committed to the course, but, rather, they should be seen as students who have come to see what the course is like and make an informed decision about attending. One student said she was there, among other things, out of "curiosity." Another student, Magarita, came to class occasionally throughout the pilot course and insisted that she was not in the class, but was "just visiting."

Studies of adult education that provide explanations for the high drop rate in programs say that students cite factors exogenous to programs as the cause of their leaving (Darkenwald, 1986; Sticht, 1988). Students in this course cited exogenous factors such as deciding not to use their paid educational leave for this class, preferring to save it for attendance at the community college. Sandra wanted to take classes at the community college, too. Elliot planned to pursue social work, first by taking courses at the community college and then at the local state university. Other students worried that with recently increased work loads, they would not have time to finish their work and attend class.¹⁶

¹⁵Adult education programs typically have high attrition rates. James G., one of the students, noted that the attrition in the IBHW Educational Program was just like at a local community college he had attended where "classes shrink to half the size."

¹⁶One factor that program planners had little control over and which may have contributed to the heavy loss in students after the third meeting was the Fourth of July holiday. The Fourth fell on a class meeting day, and, therefore, an entire week passed between Class #3 and Class #4. Enthusiasm and momentum that had built up during the early classes could easily be lost during such an interruption.

But, based upon our interviews with students, the counselor's report on the pilot project, and talk with program staff, there appeared to be significant endogenous factors that contributed to students who had "checked out" the course, deciding against taking it. These factors related to student decisions to attend the class included the confusion caused by the program staff resulting from their sheer numbers in the class, their differing in definitions of participatory and worker-centered education, and their underlying assumptions held about workers in the program which conflicted with their professed goals. In an early interview, for example, Cathy says, "I don't know what this class is for, because there's a lot of purpose[s] and there are a lot of different aims, I mean, for the class, but I don't know exactly. Maybe they don't either."

Even students who stayed on complained of too much talking about things other than the stated course content. Others complained to the counselor of a "hidden agenda from the union," that there was a "discrepancy . . . between the flyer about the course and what happened in class," and that "there was not a genuine intention to teach." The counselor had three students tell her that they were not learning anything or enough in the course. An examination of some of the fundamental assumptions apparent in the lived curriculum of the course will help elucidate these student comments and reveal how difficult it is to implement a program.

In planning meetings, program leaders expressed the desire to implement a curriculum that was at once participatory, empowering, and worker-centered. We have talked about what those notions meant for various parties during the planning stages, but their enactment in the classroom became a possible source of confusion and distrust for students. A crucial aspect of empowerment in education is that the students learn and discover from each other rather than relying on the teacher to pass that knowledge along to them. In this way, a call for "empowerment" is a call for a "horizontal" or student-centered curriculum rather than a "vertical" or teacher-centered one. In this program, however, the notions of how to empower students were top-down, vertical, that is. Program staff taught what they felt would be empowering for students to learn, an approach rather different from the one found in most empowerment theory, which suggests that students must teach each other through group discussions (Giroux, 1983; Shor, 1989). While we are by no means opposed to pursuing student empowerment per se, our point here is that any attempt to "teach" something that is empowering means that teachers rather than students have

retained power and, therefore, a hierarchical relationship continues to exist in the classroom.

During the first few class meetings, it became clear that SOS staffers and sometimes the program director, too, saw "worker-centered" to mean the analysis of "workers' conditions and their relationship to that condition." Many of their statements and questions in the class served this end. This analysis was presented as a way to understand the work experiences students described in class, and the teaching was primarily the responsibility of the counselors, although as the course progressed the roles of teacher and counselor became blurred as each took on more and more tasks of the other, including this one. Working from a rather idealized notion of "worker issues," program staff apparently assumed that as union members, students would naturally agree with these antimanagement statements and that such statements would serve not only to teach and reinforce the traditionally antagonistic relationship between unions and management, but also to align the program leaders with the student-members. Even in their introductions on the first day, program leaders made a point to list their credentials as "regular folks" from a working class background. Ann Stein stated that she had been a UAW member and the program director said he had been a carpenter in the past.

Program staff made this analysis of the condition of the worker, first of all, by making unsolicited negative comments about management, either specifically about Elmwood General or about management in general. For example, when the program director described the program for the first time to the class, he made the point that management cooperation in the program had been difficult to attain. When another staff member introduced the program, she did so by putting the workers in opposition to management: "Most management says workers are not paid to think but paid to work. Here we begin to take back what management has taken from us."

A second way program leaders presented their analysis of worker conditions was by providing summary statements after student comments about their experiences or after a discussion about work or management. For example, when students started talking about Elmwood General removing time clocks so they would not have to pay for every minute people worked, the outside consultant concluded, "So there's racism, sexism, discrimination here at Elmwood General." After the introduction activity on the first day of class (see Appendix D), the teacher asked, "What did you find out?" Rather than waiting

for students to respond, Stein spoke up saying, "Not many have filed union grievances. And I want to know why not." Moments later the teacher asked, "How many of you get angry at work? What makes you angry?" After a discussion revealing the students' confusion over paid educational leave, she concluded, "Workers don't get all the information from management." Following another discussion of how management discourages the taking of sick leave, the learning advocate said, "Remember Mr. Jones? More than twenty years without taking sick leave. Management uses him as an example. We don't want to do that."

On the second day of class Michael, a student in the course, complained about the unfairness of the on-call versus permanent employee distinction at Elmwood General, particularly with regard to paid educational leave (only permanent employees are eligible). The counselor responded to this statement by asking a rhetorical question, designed to lead to a student critique of management. Nancy, the counselor, queried, "Can I ask a question? Why does Elmwood General do that?" It was a rhetorical question because everyone knew the answer and many tried to answer the question at once. Marie could be heard above the others saying, "No benefits. It's so they don't have to pay you so many benefits."

When Ethan Levin, the program director, gave the writing assessment assignment on the second day of class which asked students to write about their experiences at work, he ad-libbed by suggesting, "Write as much as you can with as much detail as possible. If you have been screwed over, tell us how," revealing his antimanagement message as well.

Students reacted to the ongoing analysis and discussion of their condition as workers with little enthusiasm. In fact, it may have led to suspicion and distrust on the part of the students. To Stein's statement that there's "racism, sexism, discrimination here at Elmwood General," one student rejoined, "That's in every job, isn't it?" When the teacher, Deborah, asked Ned to add more detail to his writing assessment (the assignment in which Levin urged students to tell if they'd been "screwed" by Elmwood General), Ned replied, "Name names? I'm not going to name names." These examples alone suggest a certain resistance to the counselors' notion of what will empower students.

While students, too, could find many points on which to criticize management at Elmwood General, they had numerous complaints about the union and its representation of

them as well. For example, when the learning advocate told students that they should take their sick leave if they are ill, a student responded by raising a critique of the union. Ned said,

I have a question, and I heard the union had something to do with it, about taking away holiday pay.

This led a number of students to make complaints about the union:

I belong to 28; 190 negotiates for 28. I pay union dues, but I have no vote on the contract. We have to accept the vote 190 makes for us. I'm at the top of seniority, but I have to work weekends.

A third student then said: "We feel like the union's not working for us. And that is part of what makes us angry." Another seconded that point. Then someone said, "You'll be labeled a troublemaker if you complain."

Lois, the learning advocate for this class, and also the union steward for environmental services replied to these statements by defending the union's position, "Don't be selfish. Stand together. Remember that if you get a weekend off, someone else in the union has to work it."

Given the recent history of the union, management, and the workers reviewed in an earlier section, the response of students to these statements with critiques of the union should not have been surprising to program staff. Student critiques of the union were responded to with a statement of the union's position on the matter, as stated by the counselor, the outside consultant, or the program director.

Planners' Assumptions about Student Abilities

The program staff's assumptions regarding students' academic backgrounds and abilities also played an important role in shaping their nascent relationships with the potential students. Without getting to know their students, they considered them to be incapable and limited in their abilities to cope with the literacy demands of their jobs. In one planning meeting, for example, Ann Stein stated that workers could not read caution signs posted in the hospital or handling directions on bottles of industrial cleansing solutions. Furthermore, these notions were inherent to the model itself. The incorporation

of a counselor implied that students coming into the program would have problems that they needed help solving. The role of the learning advocate was based on the idea that students were indeed powerless in the classroom and needed help overcoming their deficiencies and dealing with the learning environment again.

The staff's assumptions were revealed in their interaction with the students once the course began and in the curricular choices that were made and implemented as the course progressed. These are similar assumptions to those frequently found in conventional approaches to workplace literacy, which assumes that adult workers are intellectually incapable and incompatible with the program's participatory goals.

The first formal activity that occurred in the class was quite revealing of the teacher's and the outside consultant's assumptions about student abilities. The "Introductions" activity (see Appendix D) began with the teacher handing out a blue worksheet with "Directions" typed at the top and a sentence or two under the letters A, B, and C. After handing out the worksheets, the teacher asked students to read each set of directions out loud to her, asking the class, "What does A say?", "What does B say?", "What does C say?" Then, when students were reading through the list of categories on the handout, the teacher asked, "Does anybody have any questions about words?"

From this first lesson, it is clear that the teacher doubted that the students could comprehend these basic directions. This belief was also evident in Stein who, after the reading of the directions, feigned difficulty in understanding the directions by saying, "I don't understand. Could you show me?" Of course, she did understand as she had taken part in planning this activity, but she believed that students would benefit from her asking this question. Here she revealed her belief that even after going over the instructions out loud, students would be unable to follow them.

This same assumption that the students were unable to comprehend was evident in the first formal reading activity, which occurred on the third day of class. A portion of the contract had been copied for students; they were grouped and asked to read about educational leave pay. After the students had read in groups, they went over the readings together. Typical teacher questions were, "What does commencing mean?" and "What

does increments mean?" Students, however, were able to immediately provide synonyms for each of these vocabulary questions.¹⁷

Students, unaware of the assumptions of the program leaders, showed some frustration with being treated as if they did not understand basic words and concepts as early as the first day of class. During the "Introductions" activity described above, students cooperated politely with the teacher's request to read A out loud, reading that direction in unison. But they became resistant when she insisted they read the others out loud as well. When she asked them to read B, only one person spoke up. And when she asked them to read C, no one responded. Finally, Richard spoke up, "You're supposed to read it aloud." Then someone grudgingly complied. Frustration was also apparent in the tone of Frida's voice when, during her opening comments on the first day of class, Ann Stein made it a point to define the word "grant." Frida said fairly loudly and with some exasperation, "We *know* what a grant is."

Stein discussed her assumptions about students' previous educational experiences at length in program planning meetings. She announced the same assumptions to the students on the first day of class, informing them, "For most of you . . . you left [school] because you didn't like it," without ever finding out from them about their actual experiences.

In actuality, these students had vast educational experience. Some students volunteered this information in the early days of the class. Ned, Michael, Yolanda, and Cathy had all earned their Certified Nurse's Aide certificates, and Frida had earned a medical/clerical certificate. Cathy told us in an interview that she had been a doctor in China, a position requiring six years of college. Ellen told us of numerous ESL classes she had attended. Marie had attended community college at various times in her life, pursuing her own interests. While these students may have had bad experiences in their educational histories, and, in fact, the learning advocate herself revealed the most about such a past,

¹⁷ The outside consultant also revealed her belief that the students were unable to comprehend management memos when, to prove the importance of learning the language of the contract, she asked the class, "For example, have you ever seen a letter from management posted and you read it and reading it and you say to somebody next to you, 'What'd they say?'"

The program director revealed his beliefs about student abilities when he presented the writing assessment activity to students on the second day of class, before he had seen any of their writing: "We are all good talkers here, but something happens between the head and the paper. . . . We need to clear up our capacity to think on paper. . . ." Here he indicated the belief that students' writing difficulties were tied to problems in thinking clearly.

they were nevertheless quite well-educated and they were not so embittered with the notion of education that they did not see its inherent potential value, as evidenced by their willingness to try it one more time. In addition, students took part in a great many activities requiring reading, writing, and math abilities everyday, both at work and on their own time. Ned arrived at class with a biography under his arm, others brought in magazines, and the use of calendars and datebooks was widespread among the workers who came to "check out" the class.

Student questions in class suggested that students expected it to be school-like in content, in organization of its lessons, in its materials, and in the interaction between teacher and student. They came ready to take notes and were often seen writing down ideas. In short, they were serious about making a go of this new academic endeavor and they expected to be treated like intellectually able students. During the first class session, Cathy asked, "What is the format of this class? Lecture? I'm a nursing student and I want to learn to write nursing reports, medical reports." The teacher answered: "There will be lots of writing, very little lecture." Another student asked the project director what the students would get when the course was finished, "A certificate? A diploma?" In another example, Frida wanted to know if there would be a textbook, and how they were to get them. The director of the program explained that there probably would not be any textbooks, just xeroxes of things students brought in or were interested in. Math problems would probably come from real math problems in their lives, like the paycheck stub. Frida's corner of the table responded to this answer by whispering about the need for a textbook to study math.

The Role of Work in Workplace Literacy

Another assumption about the students that added to the confusion created in the first classes was the belief that "work" was the most important aspect of students' lives, that it defined them. People in the class were called "workers," even though they were in the role of students at the time. There was also the assumption that the primary motivation for workers to take a literacy class was to improve on the job and/or move up in the workplace. This assumption was apparent in the flyer for the class, since it gave only work-related topics to interest students in the class; in the questionnaire designed to discover student interests (see Appendix E) because nearly all possible answers provided

were work-related; and in the curriculum designed for the course, as we will see shortly. To the program planners, one aspect of the "work" in a workplace literacy program was that the content of all the learning should be work-related in some way. Yet what "work" meant was ambiguous and unclear. "Work" was used to mean simultaneously different aspects of being on the job: it referred to doing and completing a given task, relating to coworkers and supervisors on a daily basis; it also meant following established routines and just physically being at the hospital. It was assumed that "work" (meaning specific tasks) and that "work" (meaning relationships on the job) would provide a context for learning skills, reflection, and critical thinking.

The assumption that work was the primary reason students attended the course was disproved early in the second class when students introduced themselves. And, in fact, students actually mentioned these other reasons in their introductions to the class. When students were asked why they were in the class, few tied it directly to moving up at work. Here are a few student comments:

"a mind's a terrible thing to waste, we're just sheep here [at Elmwood General],

"to learn something new,"

"to improve my skills,"

"to improve my writing,"

"I don't know why I'm here," and

"Not necessarily to advance, to learn about the union."

Only two students actually tied their being in the class to wanting to improve their work at Elmwood General.

What the students wanted from the course more closely resembled the type of educational program described in Soifer et al. (1990) in that they apparently hoped for a broader and more meaningful educational experience as human beings, more than the strictly work-oriented approach provided by IBHW. The student's interest in topics other than work topics was more clearly evident in their responses to the questionnaire handed out on the second day of class (see Appendix E). On most questions, students were limited to the work-related choices that were for them. For example, of a possible ten reasons a

student could select from to answer "Why do you want to improve your writing and reading skills?" all were work-related choices such as "I want to be a CNA," or "I want to do my current job better," except one which read "I want to get my GED." But sometimes students wrote in answers. These reveal the students as having an interest in taking the class for a variety of reasons, very few related to their current job or a job that they were interested in getting at Elmwood. The write-ins for this question included: "I want to go back to school," "I want to study psychology," "I want to go into business—a challenging position," and "Just for me." In write-in answers to other questions, they revealed an interest in using this class for "reading stories," "writing letters to friends," and writing "songs." Yet, program planners agreed that the content of instruction, as well as the context, should be work-related as suggested by proponents of functional context literacy (Askov et al., 1989; Philippi, 1989; Sticht, 1979; Sticht & Mikulecky, 1984).

Students were repeatedly asked to identify their perceived needs in terms of specific skills in the workplace, not only on the questionnaire given early in the course but also in class discussions about what content to cover, a questionnaire in anticipation of the next course in the series, and, of course, in the discussions with workers that occurred before the pilot began. All assumed the relationship between needed skills on the job and student interest in the course. Students were also asked to bring in materials from work that could be used in class.

However, student materials that were brought in such as a stack of forms from the oncology department and a pamphlet on chemical dangers from housekeeping, were never used in class activities. This reveals not only how student knowledge and expertise about the workplace was unvalued and unrewarded, but also suggests how "work" was not what happened in their department but a highly reified topic in the imagination of the program staff (Simon, Dipbo, & Schneke, 1991). This separation of "real" work from an idealized notion of it as the content of the course was also reflected in the evolving classroom interaction which generally began with students and the counselor discussing real problems at Elmwood General and switched abruptly to the teacher and students imagining some decontextualized work-related skill that they needed to learn such as memo writing.

In addition, there was no apparent attempt to include the outside interests of students mentioned on the questionnaires that asked for student feedback on their reading and writing interests. Instead, the content of the course had a decidedly work-related

orientation. In fact, the notion that the coursework should be about "work" became the basis for all decisions about curriculum content. For example, the project planners asked that the writing assessment activity originally proposed by the evaluation team—having students bring a meaningful object from their lives/work to class for discussion and writing—be changed to a work-related topic, since the class was for workers. Personal journal writing was an activity begun in the second week of the course, but dropped soon after. An analysis of the topics students chose to write about in their rare opportunities to do free writing and journal writing revealed that students had a variety of interests besides work about which they wished to write. Students sometimes wrote about personal topics. These included typical diary entries or "what I did today"-type pieces, pieces about family, (including get-togethers and descriptions of relatives), descriptions of trips and days off, and pieces about friends, including a heartfelt piece about a student breaking up with her boyfriend. Students also wrote about their feelings about being in the class and about improving their literacy skills in English. When students did write about work, they did so in ways that did not relate to specific job tasks. One student wrote about her difficulties with race relations on the job, another wrote a recap of a discussion in class on health and safety at work, and a third wrote a practice letter of resignation.

Long before they talked with students or did other types of needs assessments, program planners agreed that memo writing was a skill that students in this course needed. As a result, students spent a major portion of their time in this class writing drafts of memos. Although memos were used by workers to ask for vacation leave, there were few other apparent uses for memos in the students' day-to-day work and there was no discussion about how writing memos might be used to either help them in their current job or help them move to a higher-level position. Furthermore, the students were not given any real use within the frame of the course, either. Reading activities included portions of a health and safety manual produced by the union, a short story about a worker who wrote an effective memo, medical terminology, the contract, and a pamphlet produced about HIV and AIDS.

Program leaders assumption that work motivated student attendance was also evident in their flyer for the course. It advertised "A new course for upgrading skills" for "Elmwood General employees who want to improve skills and prepare for higher skilled jobs." The flyer reads, "This course will help you improve: Writing on the job: forms, memos, and reports; understanding the language of health and safety information, work

orders, contracts, etc.; using medical terminology; problem solving skills for job advancement." On the first day of class, the program director reiterated this assumption by stating, "This class can help you prepare to move up."

But students indirectly called into question this stated goal of the course—to help students move up in the workplace. There was a question regarding the implied connection between upgrading skills and moving up at the job. Students' personal experiences had shown them that the one was unrelated to the other. They made this point quite clear in the first class session. Three students initiated stories of how Elmwood General disregarded their attempts to improve their job skills through education. One worker succinctly put it this way: "I've taken two different certification courses, done well in both, and I'm still pushing a broom."

Yolanda is a certified nurse's aide (CNA), but has not been allowed to become a nurse's aide. The management told her it was because she does not write English well enough. She said to the class, "I feel I've been discriminated against. I have been in the same place for fifteen years, two years temporary, thirteen years permanent, doesn't that count? I've seen people there [in housekeeping] for less than a year who have transferred, but not me." Frida told a similar story. She earned a medical/clerical certificate while working at Elmwood General, but said, "Education doesn't matter. I had a certificate in medical/clerical. . . . I had the certificate, I could do the work, but they gave me a cart to push. . . . It's not what you know, it's who you know."

These revelations by students are supported by evidence presented in an earlier section where management disclosed that an important requirement for promoting an entry-level employee is the worker's ability to use literacy practices for problem solving. This practice for selecting and promoting workers is not part of any overt policy and thus explains the perception of workers that it's "not what you know but who you know." Furthermore, some students remarked in their interviews that they did not need to read or write at all as members of the housekeeping staff. The staff had the opportunity to make this invisible hiring practice visible to the students and reveal how some of the uses of literacy might be used on their jobs. This would have allowed the students to display their knowledge of the workplace as well, giving them an opportunity to "think about familiar ideas in a new way."

This analysis of the first three class sessions reveals the effect that endogenous factors can have on students' perceptions of a course and their decisions to attend regularly after "checking it out." Program goals, stated and unstated, caused distrust among students and were sometimes contrary to student knowledge of the workplace. The limitation of the curriculum content to "work," as defined by the program personnel, and the deficit assumptions about students evident in the choices of materials and instructional method led to students' decisions not to return to the course. The following case study of Richard provides an example of how the teacher's skills approach was enacted in the classroom and reveals the importance of classroom interaction as a factor in student retention. Through a series of negative interactions with the instructor, Richard was "expelled" from the course (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982).

Richard

Richard was the most senior hospital worker in the class. He told us the first day of class that he had been at Elmwood for twenty-seven years and that he and another student in the class, Marie, who had been there twenty-five years, were the "grandparents" of the group. He was taking this class "on his own time" rather than with educational leave time from Elmwood. From the first day of class, Richard made it clear to the teachers and students alike that he was uncomfortable talking in class, uncomfortable talking about himself, and perhaps even uncomfortable just being there.

The first planned activity the class engaged in was designed to introduce students to each other. On a handout there was a list of twenty characteristics such as "wants to be a nurse," "is a parent," and "feels nervous about being in class." Participants were to pick seven such statements that interested them and find a different person in the class to sign after each statement. As participant observers, we took part in this activity as well, just like the teachers, students, and other staff members in attendance. During this activity, Richard told us that although he felt nervous about being in class, he did not want to sign after that statement on the handout. This was the first indication we had that Richard was indeed uncomfortable in class.

During the second class meeting, we went around the room telling why we were in class. When it was Richard's turn to speak, he prefaced his comments with a nervous

disclaimer, "If my voice sounds funny, it's because I don't talk too well." Ethan Levin quickly tried to reassure him by saying, "You're doing fine." Richard went on to tell the class that he had been an employee at Elmwood for over twenty-five years in Shipping and Receiving and that he came to the class to "upgrade" his "skills."

A similar incident occurred on the fourth day of class, the last time he attended. Asked to read a memo aloud that he had just written in class, he prefaced his reading with "If I can do this without stammering, I have a problem with that" Never during his talk in class did we detect a stutter or stammer. He read a clear, well-organized memo to management, asking for vacation time, a "real" use of memos at Elmwood.

In fact, despite Richard's obvious nervousness, he was quite an able student. On the second day of class there was a writing assessment activity for which students were asked to write about their likes and dislikes at work. Richard wrote quite fluently, completing three quarters of a page in approximately seven minutes. He re-read it and added a few lines. His memo was clear and concise. He was able to spend a good part of the fourth class helping another student fill out her forms for college credit.

Although Richard had made teachers and students aware that he was insecure about talking in class and that he was a sensitive, even private person, it was the interaction of the class that appears to have forced him to leave the class. The crucial moment in class for Richard came on a day when he spoke up in response to the teacher's question to the entire class. Students had been reading a handout on which the teacher had summarized the students' responses to a questionnaire regarding their preferences for the course. The first section of the handout summarized student responses to the question "Which of the following statements best describes you?" She then had the number of responses to each of the three choices listed. For example, two students selected A: "I would like to work on writing more than reading." The second section of the handout followed this same general scheme, the numbers in front of the choices in that section also indicated how many students selected that choice.

The teacher let students read through the handout for several minutes and then asked, "What did you notice that was interesting?"

Richard, who rarely volunteered, was highly engaged in this activity, and so spoke up, "That there were so many grievances." Richard was referring to the third section of the handout (which was on page two) that asked students "What kind of writing practice would be helpful to you?" followed by a list of choices, given the letters "A" through "J" such as "memo to a co-worker" (see Table 1). One choice, item "G," simply said "grievance." The number "10," the highest number given to any of the choices, was in front of this item. Richard was clearly impressed by this high number in front of "grievance."

The teacher responded to Richard's statement by questioning him,

"Yeah, but did you notice what that means?"

Richard answered flatly, "Oh."

The teacher asked, "What number are you on?"

"10G"

Meanwhile, another student said, "2F."

The teacher responded, "Listen to my question. What do the numbers mean? Where do you need to look? Read them aloud."

One student speaks up, "It's a majority."

Another one says, "Article two."

The teacher answered, "You can call them articles, some people call them questions. Let's call them questions."

Richard answered her last question, "It meant '10' to me."

The teacher asked, "Is that what it means? I wanted to call your attention to what is on the page. Good. What does 10 mean?"

Richard answered, "It was my idea it was '10,' but you must've meant something else."

By now, another student had the answer that the teacher wanted. Marie answered, "It's the lowest."

But the teacher responded to Richard's answer, "No, let's go back to the beginning. How do you tell the sections?"

A student answered, "It's numbered. The first page has one and two."

The teacher asked, "Section Three. Notice where it tells you what the numbers mean?"

Richard answered, "Looking at ten people who want to write a grievance."

The teacher asked again, "Is that what I did? Is that what it means? I wrote this, when you see ten people want to write grievances uh my idea was ten people wanted the same thing. Go to question one, find out what the numbers mean. Where does it say that?"

A student read the directions for interpreting what the numbers mean in section one, written in parentheses under the question for that section, "The numbers tell how many people checked each choice."

The teacher added, "The first and second sections are the same way so 1 means first choice, '2' means second choice, '10' means tenth choice. Now go to the next one. Number three. Where does it say what the number means? In the parentheses."

The instructions for interpreting the numbers in section three read as follows (less the parentheses):

The numbers tell the group's preferences. '1' is for first choice, '2' for second choice, and so on.

The group ranking was done by counting each person's first, second, third, and fourth choices; giving '4' points for first choice, '3' points for second choice, '2' points for third choice, and '1' point for fourth choice; and adding up the points for each kind of writing:

The teacher said, "In this case they are ranks, so 10"

Richard had her answer, "10 is the last one."

"That's right."

Richard's insistence that "10" meant "10" made perfect sense in the context of this activity. We took part in this activity along with the class, and we also thought that the "10" in front of the word "grievance" represented ten students, until the teacher pointed out otherwise. In the first two sections of the handout, ten would have meant ten students chose it; it was only logical to assume that the same system would apply in section three that had applied in sections one and two. But the teacher never told Richard that his assumption that section three was like sections one and two was the logical response to this handout. Instead, she made it clear to him and the rest of the class that his response was wrong, by repeatedly asking him what "10" meant. Even if one had read the instructions at the beginning of section three, it is doubtful that they would have meant much since they

are so intricate. In addition, the instructions did not seem important since they were in parentheses. They were de-emphasized on the page. The change in the rule for interpreting the numbers almost took on a trick-like quality.

Table 1

3. What kind of writing practice would be helpful to you?

(The numbers tell the group's preferences. 1 is for first choice, 2 for second choice, and so on.)

(The group ranking was done by counting each person's 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choices, giving 4 points for 1st choice, 3 points for 2nd choice, 2 points for 3rd choice, and 1 point for 4th choice, and adding up the points for each kind of writing.)

- 5 A. memo to a supervisor
- 7 B. memo to management
- 6 C. memo to a union representative
- 9 D. memo to a co-worker
- 4 E. nursing chart notes
- 2 F. journal writing (about your experiences and thoughts)
- 10 G. grievance
- 1 H. contract language
- 8 I. article for local union publication
- 3 J. applications and forms

2 people said they wanted to write letters to friends

1 person said, "I want to learn how to format letters in the proper words and ways."

1 person wants to work on résumé letters.

1 person added other kinds of writing: songs, music

Richard was astute to answer the teacher's question, "What does 10 mean?" by pointing out that he recognized that she wanted a different answer than the one he gave her. "It was my idea it [10] was '10', but you must've meant something else." It was clear early on in this sequence that the teacher had a single answer to her "known information" question (Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1979) in mind. The episode became a tortuous guessing game, which continued even after Richard, who had indicated numerous times that he was nervous speaking in front of the class, became frustrated and embarrassed.

In this episode between Richard and the teacher, we see a troubling tendency that we believe reveals much about her notions of learning and knowledge. When Richard and his classmates did not immediately comprehend her interpretation of "10," the teacher went back to the most basic skill she could think of necessary to interpret the number "10" in the way she meant it. So she asked students to "go back to the beginning"; she asked them to explain how they tell the sections; and she told them to go to question one. These moves suggest that she believed learning was a series of discrete skills, one built upon another, and that the reason the students did not answer her question the way she wanted was the result of a lack of "skills," rather than as a result of a poorly designed handout.

Related to this point is the fact that going over this questionnaire was her notion of a "reading" activity and that "noticing" more than "comprehending" was the goal of the activity. It reveals that the teacher approaches reading as a set of discrete skills (like the "noticing" and "overviewing" that she teaches the class), not a holistic activity.

To make matters worse, when the students did not interpret the handout as she wanted them to, the teacher started to treat them like children saying such things as "Listen to my question, read them aloud."

This was the last class Richard attended. At the next class meeting, someone mentioned that Richard may not have come to work because he was ill. A few days later we saw him in the halls at Elmwood. He said he would not be coming to class that day either because he still did not feel well. He would be going straight home after work. About a week later his good friend, Marie, commented that "Some workers feel it's [the class] too personal. . . . Men have a problem sharing in small groups. I know one student who writes illegible because he doesn't feel comfortable with sharing. He's older."

This case study reveals how the teacher's beliefs about literacy and learning as displayed in practice affected the interaction in the classroom and how the interaction can affect student decisions to stay in a course. In introducing this case study, we used Ferreiro and Teberosky's (1982) term "expel" to describe what happened to Richard because the structure of this classroom was designed to accommodate certain types of student interaction and not others. Clearly, it did not welcome Richard's. This interaction also served to instruct other students about how learning and literacy should be used and displayed if they were to continue to attend the course.

A Second Look at the Model: The Learning Advocate and the Counselor

An important innovation of this educational program was the introduction of a counselor and a student peer from the workplace as the teacher's partners in the classroom. It was the learning advocate, however, that IBWH considered to be the key to the program's success. The summary of the IBHW grant proposal states that one of the five objectives of the program was "To demonstrate the special value of 'learning stewards' [later called learning advocates] drawn from union ranks as an integral part of the teaching/educational counseling program, to encourage worker participation and retention in the project" (p. i). This notion was reiterated by Elia McDonald of the IBHW in Washington: "As far as the model is concerned, the only person not removable is the learning advocate; [the role is] unique, special, and different."

Lois, an on-call employee from maintenance, was selected by the union to be the learning advocate because people knew and liked her. Also, she had recently become shop steward and the local officials wanted her to use this new opportunity to develop that role as well. As mentioned above, the learning advocate was a class member who was to be "drawn from union ranks as an integral part of the teaching/educational counseling program, to encourage worker participation and retention in the project." While this person had numerous responsibilities outside of the classroom such as recruitment of new students, follow-up on absent students, liaison to management on issues related to the program, and participation in program planning, the classroom duties of the learning advocate received the most emphasis. In the classroom, the grant stated that the advocate was to be a peer tutor who would "assist instructors with classroom activities, enabling teachers to split classes into smaller working groups and provide additional individual attention to learners," who would "guide and direct learners to appropriate resources, and who would serve as advocate "for students in resolving any problems" (p. 37). According to the outside consultant, part of the learning advocate's role was also "to monitor the class" to "know when it's [the class] not right," to "help the teacher keep the material relevant to the work place," and to be "the person people will, should come to, if they have problems with the class or they don't like what's going on."

As the course unfolded, it became evident that the learning advocate was not fulfilling these duties. In the data presented, we can see where opportunities for the learning advocate to enact her role were lost, often to the detriment of her fellow students.

The types of interaction described in previous sections could have been mediated by the learning advocate and, according to the model, should have been. For example, the class when Marie and Yolanda asked to work as a whole class but the teacher insisted that they use the worksheet in pairs provided the perfect opportunity for the learning advocate to intervene on behalf of the students. The awkward moments between Richard and the teacher might have been repaired by a skillful learning advocate as well.

When the learning advocate *did* attempt to advocate, she was usually overruled by the teacher. In the following example, students were asked by the teacher what they wanted to cover in their last four classes—medical terminology or contract overview:

Yolanda: What—

Teacher: Medical terminology is vocabulary.

Yolanda: Yeah, I know what that means, but what is the other one?

Teacher: Contract overview.

Yolanda: I would like Medical Terminology.

Consuelo: Remember we said we're going to read sick leave that we're not sure about

Yolanda: But see Consuelo, I think that's wasting time here, don't you think?

Consuelo: But there are many words that we don't know.

Teacher: Contract vocabulary vs. medical vocabulary.

Yolanda: Medical vocabulary would be . . .

Lois: How about one contract study and three medical terminology?

Teacher: But last class will be a party and some writing . . . I haven't heard from We may be able to

Teresa: Both are important.

Nancy then reported that Marie (who was absent) had told her that she preferred to study the contract because medical terminology was too large a subject to cover. The teacher proceeded to inform the class that she would be providing an overview of medical terminology in the next class and then they would start by looking at lists of words and how words are put together. Lois, responding to the teacher's earlier statement about a

party, stated that she wanted a regular class session on the last day, not a party. She believed that any party should be either before or after class.

In this example, the learning advocate, Lois, *did* attempt to advocate for the students, but ran into a number of problems in the process. First of all, she encountered the problem of representing the myriad views and interests of the students. Throughout the course there was no single student view for the learning advocate to represent. Here we see several students disagreeing on what should be taught next and giving valid reasons for their preferences. The learning advocate came up with an arbitrary solution (one class of contract study and three on medical terminology) that did not seem to represent the student opinions voiced, as two students (Marie and Consuelo) wanted contract study and only Yolanda wanted medical terminology. Even this compromise, as flawed as it may have been, was summarily overruled by the teacher, who, in fact, taught medical terminology for all of the remaining classes except the last. On the issue of the last class, the learning advocate was again overruled. Purportedly speaking for the students, Lois said that time should not be taken from the last class for a party; any celebration should be held either before or after class. In fact, the party went ahead as the teacher had previously planned, taking up about one hour of the two hour class.

The irony of the learning advocate's position was that, as a student in the class, Lois was not only unable to advocate in this situation and others like it, she was often the victim of such interactions herself. Earlier we presented two key interactions in which Lois was a participant. In the first example, James, Lois, and several other students were attempting to answer the teacher's question about the ending of essays. In this lesson, Lois raised important issues about writing and revealed her confusion on the topic as well, yet the teacher failed to acknowledge both. The following example was discussed in a previous section where we centered our comments on the students. Here we focus on Lois, the learning advocate:

Teacher: We are going to redo [memo from 2 days before]. First we are going to read to help us. What do we mean by shape of writing? What's a paragraph?

Cathy: Group of sentences (teacher looks at her) put together . . .

Teacher: . . . about something. Paragraph is a shape of writing. [We] talk about writing as having a beginning, middle, and end. Some people call the beginning the introduction. And the end?

James: The finale.

Teacher: Well, in music and theater it's called that, and if you have a grand ending it's a finale.

Cathy: Conclusion.

James: It's the most important part.

Lois: But middle is the peak, no the plot.

Cathy: You can summarize what you said.

James: But the end is the most important part because it's what you remember the best.

Teacher: What about the middle? (No answers.) Some call it the body.

Marie: It's between the head and the feet.

Lois: What about plot? Oh wait, we're talking about writing.

Teacher: Body, middle, end, each has a different role to play. What I did here was make an outline that asks you to revise your memo. (Teacher passes out two-page handout).

Lois participated in this discussion by trying to discuss the importance of the "body" as the place where the strongest arguments are put forth. She appeared confused over whether to call it the "peak" or the "plot," whether plots were only for reading or for reading and writing, but the teacher made no attempt to resolve her evident questions, even though Lois was trying to think about her writing in the way that the teacher was asking the students. By doing this, the teacher failed to recognize both students' knowledge as well as their evident confusion on this topic. This example also points to Lois's questionable ability to tutor other students or to lead small groups on her own. Clearly she needed to be in the role of student/learner here, unfortunately the teacher did not respond to her need as such.

In the second interaction, previously used to exemplify "school rules," Lois and James were attempting to leave the classroom when the teacher called after them, using the "school rule" that there were five more minutes in class. It's 5:45.

Teacher: Are you done? (a few laughs from other groups) Start revision. Start rewriting your memo.

Lois: Me and James don't—

Teacher: What?

Lois: We got to go to work.

Teacher: Well, you don't have to go for five minutes, do you?

Lois: Well, . . .

Teacher: Do you want to do it at home?

Lois: Yes, ma'am (sarcastically).

Teacher: I'm asking you a question (apologetically).

Lois responded in a manner one would not expect from a project member, in fact she started to "talk back" to the teacher ("Well,") and then made a sarcastic remark when the teacher asked threateningly if they wanted to do the assignment at home ("Yes, ma'am"). As the learning advocate, Lois was expected to participate in classroom activities not as a student but as a tutor and coordinator of small group activities. However, she was never called upon to do so and her role as learning advocate was for the most part reduced to performing formal tasks such as opening discussions, introducing guests, being present in every class, reporting student preferences, and offering to answer the teacher's or counselor's questions. In this example, Lois not only acted like a student but like a student disrespectfully challenging the teacher. Throughout the course, Lois's participation in lessons seemed unpredictable and even sophomoric. One of the inherent contradictions of the model is apparent in this behavior. On the one hand, Stein envisioned students as unable to thrive in a typical classroom situation, while on the other hand, she expected such a student to take on the leadership role required by her definition of the learning advocate.

As envisioned, the learning advocate should have been able to respond to improprieties in the content and structure of the classroom interaction. But because of the nature of the model and its inherent contradictions, the difficulty with representing the views of all of the students, the lack of cooperation from the teacher when she attempted to intervene, and the learning advocate's inconsistent behavior (learning advocate, student, disrespectful student), the enactment of the role evolved quite differently. While the idea of including a class member from the workforce who can act at once as a special advisor to the teacher and advocate for the students seems simple enough, it turned out to be quite difficult and fragile to carry out. First, the role of learning advocate that Lois was to play

became diluted because she did not lead group discussions or tutor her fellow students. This was partly because Lois could not realistically tutor other students, partly because the counselor tended to lead one of the groups, and partly because she was never called upon to do so. Because she did not perform these duties, she became a "student" in the classroom setting.

In all fairness to the teacher (and the counselor) it was clear to us why Lois was not called upon to do some of the things that were part of the learning advocate's functions. To begin with, the learning advocate would have had to be a strong student, confident in her knowledge about written language and with clear leadership qualities. Unfortunately, Lois did not have either of these. She was a weak student, perhaps the weakest of the group, and she shied away from following classroom procedures. This might have been secondary if there had been sufficient training and continuous coaching for Lois so that she could understand the complexity of her job and the importance of doing it in ways that supported the overall educational philosophy. But Lois did not understand the "new way of learning" or the kind of teaching that it demanded and was offered very little support.

During the pilot, the role of the counselor also changed. Unlike the learning advocate, the original vision of the counselor did not call for active participation in the classroom. In fact, the grant proposal called for a counselor to be available only "before and after class." The counselor stated in her interview, "My work is less to be the one out there. The counselor's role is to help the learning advocate to be the one out there." Her job was to "help develop a system, encouragement and provide a structure and a procedure for Lois to do follow-up work." But this changed early in the program and soon the counselor was attending all of the classes. Thus, the counselor became the focal point of the model, rather than the learning advocate, as she took over many of the roles designated for the learning advocate and even began to engage in the teacher's activities as well.

The redefinition of the counselor's role began as early as May 10, 1991, when an abstract of the grant provided to the advisory board stated that SOS would "provide a counselor *in* each class [emphasis added]" rather than before and after each class. The counselor explained how she began to attend every class: "Initially I wasn't in the class. I was going to be here once a week and then I decided to come, since I could only be there for the first hour, I decided to come twice a week, because I felt like I wanted to be there for various reasons, but that's not necessarily what the vision is."

The counselor took on an active role in the class, as modeled during the first two class sessions (ironically) by the outside consultant who had originally envisioned the counselor as not attending the class at all. As we mentioned in our discussion of the student "check out" period, the counselors, both the outside consultant and the counselor herself, Nancy, made statements and asked questions of students in these early classes that were designed to lead to an analysis of "workers' conditions and their relationship to that condition." As the program progressed, the counselor continued to ask such questions while also expanding her role in the classroom. As we described in "From Plans to Practice," Nancy took over the job of opening each class session (a job that had been the learning advocate's on the first two days), usually with a question designed to initiate discussion about what they had applied from the classroom on the job. Then she facilitated whatever student-initiated topics arose. These discussions often went on for half of the allotted class time. She also did much of the follow-up on students and reported student curriculum preferences to the teacher, both jobs that were originally given to the learning advocate. The counselor also initiated an elaborate "scripting" ritual with the learning advocate in which she would provide the learning advocate with lines to say in a dialogue they would perform in front of the class in order to raise such issues as attendance, dropout rate, and student trust with the class. The counselor explained that she did such "scripting" because she "felt like she [Lois] wouldn't know what to say . . . [and] wanted to make sure that she would be able to say something."

As the pilot began to wind down, the counselor not only performed many of the functions originally intended for the learning advocate, but she occasionally took on the role of academic teacher as well, providing instruction in reading and writing that had been strictly in the teacher's domain before. In the following example, Nancy, rather, than the teacher opened "the studies" portion of the class with the following statement:

Counselor: I wanted to say a couple of things. We had a long discussion the other day and it was very lively. What you have written is good, [but] another important part of writing is passion. Powerful language is important for persuasion, about how Elmwood cares more about money than about people, the way it is like a plantation. Tie it in, [with] a lot of persuasive, inspiring talk [like the other day]. Practice writing those kinds of things.

Teacher: (points to "passionate" on the board) What does this word mean?

All discussion of writing, good writing, and how to write had been the teacher's role, now the roles in the model had so blurred that the counselor was performing duties that had been envisioned for both the learning advocate and the teacher. In addition, the counselor's duties as stated in the grant proposal were not performed as specified because she was not available part of the time and evidently students were not interested or in need of the service. As mentioned by the counselor in the excerpt from her interview already quoted, she was unable to meet with students before class for at least the first month of the class. In addition, no one met with the counselor at all outside of class until July 25. We know of no other meetings with her before or after class.

While having more than one teacher in the classroom is not necessarily a bad thing, the model was not a team teaching model. It was to provide extra, specialized personnel in the classroom. The counselor, who was not a teacher in her own right, not only took on some of the teaching duties, but the *modus operandi* of Deborah. The program was conceived as student centered where the teacher would be a facilitator and resource for student learning. By relieving the learning advocate of her leadership duties and not encouraging student activities that the students could organize and monitor, the class became "top heavy" with two teachers rather than one running the show.

How could this have occurred? First of all, the model itself contained key contradictions that interfered with its enactment. The creation of the role of learning advocate was based on the inherent assumption that students needed help socially to achieve academically and that they would be passive in the classroom. But, paradoxically, the model called for a student to fulfill the multiple and complex roles described above such as tutor, group leader, and classroom monitor to help other students over their various "barriers to learning." Secondly, the addition of a social support system into the classroom automatically reduced the role of the teacher by limiting her access to students and therefore her ability to develop more personal ties with them. The class became just as much a group therapy session as an educational endeavor. The split that became so problematic for the counselor and the teacher to bridge was built into the design of the model (although according to the model, it would have been the learning advocate and the teacher engaged in this battle for the interest and attention of students). Furthermore, the learning advocate, originally called the learning steward, was seen as an intermediary between teacher and students. It was assumed that teacher and students would not be able to collaborate well in the classroom and that student "interests" would have to be expressed to their teacher

through the learning advocate. Lastly, the model did not include a prominent role for students in this ostensibly student-centered program.

Those were just the problems inherent in the role of the learning advocate. The reality of the situation was that because of weeks of disagreement over the desired qualities in a learning advocate and who among the workers best fit their description, Lois was not selected until the week of June 6th, ten days before the original date for set classes to begin and seventeen days before the classes actually got underway. Additionally, training for all staff of the pilot program was almost non-existent. The outside consultant herself admitted "that Lois was put on without really, um, the whole, whole training period." She explained,

Both Lois and Nancy on the whole were just thrust in there on their own essentially. So they were having to figure it out on their feet by themselves. I was gone for, you know, one month pretty consistently. I was here two days a week. Basically I talked with Nancy on the phone. I didn't, there was about a three-week period when I didn't talk to Lois at all because our schedules never quite meshed. I think they did really well under those circumstances, right? Just sort of . . . figuring it out, talking together, kind of calling me with questions when they had them. And Lois, especially, I mean Nancy who had worked here for a year has more of a, but Lois didn't know anything about what was going on and her training was a couple four hour blocks of time where we sat down and threw a lot of things at her which she couldn't possibly absorb or know or understand. So I think after this next training, which in itself will be a real learning experience for Lois because now she'll get in the peer counseling training, will get to look at what that experience was in a different way, and, um, apply it differently. But Lois' own concepts were much like the workers so and she didn't, um, she really didn't have the confidence or feel that she had the authority to, in a sense probe with people when they were, were coming in and I think she felt vulnerable.

The counselor, Nancy, who also had only one day of training, was left to provide for the continued training of the learning advocate. Furthermore the project director was called away by the IBHW to write another grant and did not monitor the situation as he had been hired to do.

Because this was a pilot project with a new model, neither the project staff nor the students themselves had ever observed or enacted the role of learning advocate. No one knew what it would look like. As a result, students were unable to either identify these people in the classroom or to explain what their roles were supposed to be. Interviews and discussions with students revealed that the two people in the model who were supposed to

have the most interaction with the students—the learning advocate and the counselor—had left little impression on the students. For example, in an interview near the end of the course, Marie was asked to comment on the counselor's role in the classroom, but Marie had a difficult time answering as she was unsure which of the regularly attending program staffers was the counselor.

Another student, Cathy, was asked what she thought of having the counselor, Nancy, in the class. Cathy replied, "I don't know what's her, what's her job? What's she doing for the class? I mean, what's she doing? I don't know what she's supposed to do for the class. Just counseling for people who don't come or?" Similarly, when Cathy was asked about the learning advocate, Lois, she said, "Who's Lois? . . . Oh, yeah, I know, she's not the student, but I don't know what's her, I know she's different from us." And Marie did not know who the learning advocate was when she was asked.

But everyone had been in traditional classrooms and that common experience led to an overabundance of teacher-directed lessons. Without training that allowed for the development of some mutual understandings, and without a continuous dialogue among the counselor, the teacher, and the learning advocate directed at reflection and discovery of new alternatives, the program staff defaulted to the traditional model of the classroom as we have shown time and time again. In planning the program and mapping out the model, its authors failed to take into account that these many roles would be shaped in practice by numerous factors such as personalities, professional background and experience, the actual workplace, the students in the class, and so on. Furthermore, each role was conceived in isolation, each role was defined but the fact that the way that any given role would potentially affect how the others were enacted was overlooked.

OPPORTUNITIES LOST AND LESSONS LEARNED: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND EPILOGUE

The IBHW program began as an attempt to develop a program tailor-made for adult workers. Concerned with the high attrition rates and general failure of existing programs to serve the needs of workers, they proposed a model for workplace classes that would provide social support and that would create a learning situation that would encourage high student involvement and an active role in the learning process. Their efforts were admirable because innovation requires risk-taking and a willingness to engage in constructive criticism. There are many lessons to be learned from this program. While we are not making sweeping claims about all literacy programs, this one, a demonstration program in many ways, certainly provides fodder for consideration of such programs and is particularly interesting because of the number of assumptions about workplace literacy programs that it challenges.

The first lesson, learned early on, is simply the complexity of implementing a workplace literacy program, whatever the specifics of the program may be. While school-based programs are complex, too, there is an even greater complexity at the workplace, with their unique histories of labor-management-worker relationships, that must be considered. There are also a myriad of educational issues that must be addressed. Finally, there is the diversity of worker needs and interests that must be contended with. All of these factors contribute to making the operation of an on-site program such as the one described here a challenging proposition in the first place. The story of the IBHW program provides ample evidence of this.

There is a tendency among designers of workplace literacy programs to assume that all workplaces are the same (Askov et al., 1989). However, this study reveals the unique characteristics of a particular workplace that influenced many aspects of the program development and implementation. For example, labor-management history at Elmwood led to unexpected reactions from workers with regard to the literacy program. Workplaces are not generic. Each has its own history which will affect the implementation of a workplace program differently. Workplaces are not neutral sterile settings; they are complex social settings (Darrah, 1990; Gowen, 1990) where people build relationships and interact with each other. *Therefore, the design of each workplace literacy program should be based on detailed knowledge of the specific workplace in which it is to be implemented.*

In this study, we saw a union-based program that claimed to represent the needs and desires of the workers. It presumed an adversarial stance between workers and management, as evidenced in the early use of the term "learning steward" for "learning advocate." But we learned that the relationship between the workers and management was not so simple. Nor was the relationship between the workers and the union clear-cut. The union also assumed that workers had a single opinion that could be represented by a learning advocate. But we saw that workers had a variety of interests and goals in the classroom that were not fully represented. *Workplace literacy programs should not presume to know the needs, desires, and attitudes of those they intend to teach without having gathered detailed knowledge of such from the workers themselves.*

The workplace literacy program described here, like many others, also assumed that because students worked at the same place, a sense of community already existed among them. This community of interest was to provide additional support to students in their educational endeavors. While indeed we have seen that students in this program were supportive of each other, we did not find any evidence that it was because they worked together. Although a number of the students worked in housekeeping, some worked days, some evenings, some were on-call, others permanent. Still other students worked in different departments and had never met most of the students in the class. Furthermore, the support that we did observe was not sufficient to prevent many of the students who "checked out" the program from leaving it. *Because a pre-existing community of interest cannot be assumed, building a community of interest is part of what needs to occur in the workplace literacy classroom.* Communities of interest are established through sharing interests and efforts over time. Therefore, educators must think in terms of long-term programs rather than quick fix remedies.

Like many educators currently engaged in the task of rethinking adult education, (Kazemek, 1988; Shor, 1989; Simon et al., 1991; Soifer et al., 1990) program planners emphasized the need to create situations that were both relevant and challenging for working adults. They intended to develop a curriculum that was worker-centered and participatory. They advocated using the classroom in such a way that workers would have the opportunity to explore ideas and understandings through dialogue. Learning about work and how to use reading and writing in ways that might be relevant to their daily survival on the job became the dual objectives of their program.

In the planning stages of this program, work was seen both as an educational content and as the basis for reflective learning. Rather than restricting efforts to accomplish tasks on specific jobs, they sought to help participants rethink the ways they define their work lives (Simon et al., 1991). They thought that if situations at work were rendered problematic, participants might go beyond their immediate situation and consider different aspects and solutions to problems and issues. According to the program planners, exploration and dialogue would lead to participants learning to develop and express ideas. They were going to learn to communicate, to listen, and be listened to. In reading and writing about issues that they deeply care about, they would fine tune some skills and acquire others. These activities were to be the basis for developing critical, creative, and innovative thinkers.

Program planners tried to prevent the usual problems with low retention in adult literacy programs by designing a model that would provide social support to students in the classroom. They believed that it might not be easy for a teacher to work with students in the new ways that were needed, so they included a learning advocate to help the teacher by informing her of student needs, concerns, and interests. They also included a counselor to provide support for students who were experiencing difficulties or who needed extra support with personal problems such as child care or transportation arrangements.

Yet once the program moved from the planning stage to the classroom, problems arose almost immediately. To begin with, the three people most directly responsible for planning curriculum—the SOS consultant, the program director, and the teacher—had different and often contrasting ideas about what student participation and learning meant. Secondly, their notions of literacy and learning were often contradictory to their stated participatory philosophy. Discussion and dialogue were allowed, but it was never clear how to shape teaching and learning from talk that problematized the workplace. During the discussions, the counselor intervened to reinterpret reality for the workers, rather than letting them reinterpret it for themselves. They would say "So there's racism, sexism and discrimination" or "It's set up against you," thereby "naming the world" for the students (Freire, 1970), in a vertical, top-down, rather than worker-centered structure. Then they would "move on" to the lessons or "the studies" as the learning advocate called it.

Most often, the teacher then presented a highly structured, directed lesson on reading or writing skills. She worked from notions of reading and writing that viewed

written language learning as the mastering of the sum of unconnected skills. In doing so, the point of the various teaching episodes became mastering techniques rather than understanding issues and looking for solutions. Conceiving literacy as skills predetermined how students could participate: they could answer questions, fill out worksheets, and overview. Because teaching based on student mastery of skills required step-by-step preparation of lessons, the structure for learning during the lesson segment of the class was very limiting. She often played guessing games, invoked school rules, or countered their answers. This set up a frame for the students to fail in, or even to be "expelled" from (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982), like James and Richard. No matter how they answered, she was the holder of the correct answers and they were not. Furthermore, the skills quickly became disconnected from any meaningful context, and they became an end in themselves. They were no longer connected to the workplace, or to their job, and they were rarely allowed to be connected to students' personal goals. Therefore, the larger picture of their usefulness and meaning for students faded away.

These findings reveal that important reasons for attrition can be found in the classroom. Students leave courses not only for exogenous reasons such as transportation and work schedules, but for reasons endogenous to the course such as the way the curriculum and interaction are designed to include or exclude their participation. Sarmiento and Kay (1990) make a similar point noting that if workers are leaving educational programs, these programs must not be serving their needs. Yet these factors are often ignored in planning and implementing workplace literacy programs and in adult education programs in general (Balmuth, 1985; Grubb et al., 1991; Kazemek, 1988; Soifer et al., 1990). *Pedagogy needs to be a main concern of adult education and workplace literacy programs.* It cannot be the last thing considered, as it usually is.

A direct connection exists between the curriculum design and the assumptions about learning in this workplace program. *A broader conception of the relationship between literacy, learning, and participation is needed if programs are to provide meaningful educational experiences for students.* Literacy is not just a series of discrete basic skills devoid of context; rather, it is a tool used for specific social purposes in context. Students should not be defining words, but using those words for their own social ends by engaging in real literacy practices: sustained reading for comprehension and writing to real audiences (Rigg & Kazemek, 1985; Soifer et al., 1990).

Because learning occurs through social interaction, the structure of classroom participation must also be attended to. The creation of such an environment requires time. Programs should not be conceived of as band-aids for a lack of skills, rather they should be thought of as opportunities for the construction and development of student knowledge, which takes time for both students and teachers to recognize as such. The project director's early vision of the program sounded much like this, however, in the confusion that ensued during the planning and implementation of the project, these ideas were lost before they ever got off the ground. The result was the program was teacher-centered and her goals, rather than the students', were the focus. *It is important to create classroom environments where students have ownership of both the process and product of their efforts.*

We began this paper by discussing the debate between two paradigms in the adult literacy community: those advocating basic skills and those pushing for a more critical pedagogy. Problems arose in this program when it embraced common notions about adult students and practices from other proponents of workplace programs that were inconsistent with their own goals for a student-centered, critical workplace literacy program. This occurred for a number of reasons. Program planners ran out of time for curriculum development leading them to fall back on traditional notions of teaching and learning found in a basic skills approach to literacy education. The project director revealed his frustration regarding curriculum development in a meeting with us before the pilot program began: "There should be a separate curriculum developer . . . I should have been reading stuff like this for a month, to be ready and so I feel like . . . you know, having come up with this in a real creative way for this pilot, I'm feeling like I have to default to old thinking, that's the tug"

In addition, training for the crucial program staff in the classroom was sketchy at best. Without a clear understanding of both the underlying theoretical framework of such a critical literacy program as well as a clear vision of how it would be enacted in the classroom, all of the participants in the program—the teacher, learning advocate, counselor, and the students—naturally resorted to the traditional classroom model epitomized by a basic skills approach. Old habits die hard. *Program personnel must be well-grounded in related educational theory and be willing to use it as a resource.* They should not rely on educational commonplaces to serve this purpose. Theory is an important tool for teachers in a program committed to a student-centered curriculum where responding to student needs requires flexible planning and a continuous renewal of

classroom activities. To be able to shape and modify curriculum in a short amount of time requires a thorough understanding of teaching and learning. To be able to adapt materials or move away from them and create new ones would be unsuccessful otherwise (Soifer et al., 1990).

The inherited assumptions about teaching and learning, literacy, curriculum content, and materials embraced by the program were clearly exemplified in the decision to limit all content and subject matter to work. The program wanted to implement participatory pedagogy, yet the first condition necessary for it to be successful was that students be considered competent participants and that their experience and understanding is a valid source of knowledge. The program only valued work experiences, however, not experiences in other aspects of their lives. How can one dialogue and explore ideas if a program predetermines which experiences count and which ones do not? The purpose of the majority of programs that advocate limiting subject matter to work is to improve productivity, not encourage critical thinking. They seek to embed the learning of basic skills within the context of specific jobs. With words strikingly similar to the program staffs, they claim that use of work-related materials gives learners the opportunity to relate what they are learning about work to what they already know. Their experience on the job thus becomes an important knowledge base for their learning (Askov et al., 1989; *The Bottom Line*, 1989; Carnevale et al., 1990; Chisman, 1989; Philippi, 1991; Sticht, 1988; Strumpf et al., 1989; Lund & McGuire, 1990).

It is not difficult to understand why, despite their good intentions, the IBHW program adopted this practice. The idea that work is the only valid content for learning in workplace programs is extremely widespread and largely uncontested (Soifer et al., 1990). It is considered to be by many the basis for meaning and motivation in adult learning. Askov et al. (1989), for example, explain, "Occupation focussed instruction is an ideal method of adult education because it relates learning to their specific job needs and interests" (p. 3-2).

Building on students' previous knowledge and experience most likely will give meaning to their learning, but we did not find any evidence that indicates that the experience that is most meaningful to them is, in fact, work related. While work is surely a major activity for many adults, it cannot be assumed that all that they do is work, or that work is the only meaningful thing that occurs in their lives. In fact, many adults might prefer to

think about anything but work. We saw in this program how important it is to build on student knowledge, and how detrimental it is to students when what they know is ignored. But we did not see that the knowledge and experience most valued by students was work related. Although they had few opportunities to do so, we saw students trying to bring in many aspects of their lives. When given the opportunity to write in their journals or do free writing, they chose topics unrelated to work; when they talked among themselves they brought up their families, upcoming events, and personal histories. *All adult student goals and interests should be respected* (Hull & Fraser, 1991) *in a workplace literacy program.*

Because workers' educational interests and needs go beyond the confines of the workplace, audits of the workplace are a limited source of information for curriculum planning. The needs assessment conducted during the planning process of this program, like audits of the workplace, only examined the perceived needs in the workplace, never asking for other information about student interests outside of the workplace. Even when confronted with students outside interests on the questionnaire conducted in class, the class retained its focus on work as the only legitimate topic of reading, writing, and discussion.

Using work-based materials and tasks is also based on the belief that workers will see immediate use for the basic skills that they are learning. The program planners we observed also thought that immediate application on the job was evidence of learning. Remember the counselor's question at the beginning of some classes: "What have you learned in this class that you can apply on the job?" Students rarely had an answer to that question. Askov et al. (1989) state that workplace literacy is meaningful to adults because "It is basic skills instruction which uses the language, tasks, and knowledge of the workplace," language that is thought to be limited to solving work problems, naming tools and equipment, and communicating with customers.

But this picture of language use in the workplace is eerily devoid of social relationships and interaction, precisely the emphasis that this program wanted to weave into its view of being on the job. While it is not without reason to assume that language is used these ways at work, it is without reason to believe that these are the only ways that they are used at work as it has been shown by extensive empirical research (Coleman, 1989; Gumperz, 1982). Language is used for a multiplicity of reasons, for saying hello in the morning and good-bye in the evening, for talking with workmates about events on and off the job, for sharing personal items, for working out conflicts, for talking to supervisors or

about them. It is used for the creation and dissemination of knowledge, for the establishment of boundaries and borders, and for the exercise of power and control (Coleman, 1989).

Much of the confusion in the implementation of the program could be tied to the difficulties in the start-up. Many workplace literacy program how-to books recommend a partnership of interested parties, including management, the educational institution, and labor. In this program, we saw how difficult it was to coordinate such an effort. When multiple parties are involved in a workplace literacy program, there will be multiple agendas, goals, and meanings that may lead to serious problems—confusion being the least of these. Therefore, *all parties need clear agreements outlining the responsibilities of each party and a timeline for completing them.* It is crucial that these agreements are kept because even the smallest deviation may have a major effect.

An important selling point for work-based basic skills is that training is likely to result in improved performance on the job and eventual advancement for workers. Workplace literacy literature is firmly grounded in the belief that education and training naturally leads to an improvement in peoples' lives, a familiar premise of the not so successful literacy efforts of the 1960s.¹⁸ For example, Carnevale et al. (1990) write,

For the individual worker, basic skills are also the keys to greater opportunity and a better quality of life. Workers with good basic skills find it easier to acquire more sophisticated skills that leverage better job and higher pay. (p. 12)

But this requires that (1) job opportunities are readily available to workers and that career ladders are explicitly defined to them and (2) that employers' hiring policies will recognize and promote workers who improve and enhance their skills. Fingeret (1990) points out that these immediate results may not be readily available to workers and that it is dishonest and deceptive to lead people to believe that it is so. The program we observed implied this in their flyer and in their representations to students in early class sessions. But we learned that students in this program did not believe that myth. They agreed that it was not "what you know but who you know" at Elmwood that determined who was promoted and who was not. Because of this, students did not relate basic skills and job performance.

¹⁸ There is extensive literature, both theoretical and practical, concerning the connections between development and literacy and education. For a summary of the literacy efforts, appraisals, and positions, see Leon Bataille's *A Turning Point for Literacy* (1976). Further discussion of this topic are in Graff (1987) and Pattison (1982). For a more recent discussion, see Venezky et al. (1990).

As we have seen, workplace literacy programs, particularly ones that attempt needed innovations such as this one, are fraught with inherent problems. These problems can and do arise at any stage in the project. As this study shows, the separation of planning and implementation is not productive; *therefore, it is important for the developers of a workplace literacy program to be present and active during the planning and implementation stages.* In addition, when multiple participants are involved they need to engage in continuous dialogue and be flexible enough to make changes in their programs should the need arise.

Epilogue

This paper describes only the first seven months of an eighteen-month long grant period. We participated in the start-up and the eight-week pilot session for a program that was funded to run three more sessions with three classes each. We were also involved with the program long enough to observe preparations for the first round of three regular classes at three sites. Unfortunately, many of the same problems that we had observed in the start-up of the pilot program occurred a second time. For example, there were problems in selecting learning advocates for the two additional sites in the program and again training was at a minimum.

In an interview with Ann Stein at the end of the pilot project she said that the next round of classes would have five days of training for the learning advocates, counselors, and teachers. But by September, this had changed to three days of training and was again shortened to two days before the training actually occurred. Stein was not personally responsible for the training this time. She gave that job to another counselor at SOS who had had no experience in the pilot program, so there was no continuity in the counseling aspect of the program.

Ann Stein left for Eastern Europe for a month as the Fall sessions started up, again leaving the counseling staff to fend for themselves. Sources in the project tell us that the Fall class held at Elmwood had unusually low attendance and was eventually canceled. Perhaps staff were able to overcome some of the difficulties that occurred in the pilot. Perhaps they were not. The opportunity to find out was also lost; we will never know.

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APPENDIX A

SKILL: _____	Learning to Learn	Oral Communication	Writing	Reading	Problem-Solving Math	Test-Taking	
APPLICATION:							
Personal Dev./ Background	-Introductions -Addressing attitudes > Learning/ School	-Sharing prior exper's w/learn-school (+/-) -How did you learn skills on current job?	-Autobiographical Writing-various issues -Describe your goals:work, life, etc.	-Reading Auto-biographies aloud & discuss -Selected reading eg Studs Terkel	-Personal finances -Budgets -Discussion re: How we use math in our lives & issues w/math	-Discuss previous exp's w/tests -Practice taking tests / discuss strategies	Personal Dev./ Background
Work Procedures	-Identifying Q's: work -Analysizing work procedures	-Describe your job -Role play: Issue OTJ re: Work ... -Skills analysis of current jobs	-"My Day At Work" -Write story for your kids about your job -Memos re:changes in work proced.	-Vocabulary/Comp/ Discussion: (V/C/D) Manuals, memos, other workplace documents	-Paycheck analysis & discussion -Job-based situations/problems -Problem-solving strategies/ac-knowledging exist-ing skills.	-Job-based in-formation (JBI)	Work Procedures
Health/Safety	-Recognizing sit-uations where H/S is an issue -Developing Q's	-Role play: Haz-ardous situation -Sharing exper's: hazardous situa-tions/protectiions	-Writing reports/ memos re: H/S -Describe dangers at work.	-V/C/D re:safety manuals, warnings, labels, etc. -Selected reading: Other workers' experiences-H/S	-JBI: Mixing chem-icals, machinery control spec's -Reading: data on work-related in-jury/death	-What H/S info included in tests required for job advancement.	Health/Safety
Job Advancement	-Analysizing Career Paths -Developing Q's -Setting Goals	-Interview: Person doing job you are interested in	-Write up what learned in inter-view. -Goals: issues, setting goals, describe dreams	-Job specifica-tions/qualifi-cation (V/C/D) -Selected reading:	-Research what math skills needed for advancement -Analysizing pay scales	-Research what tests are req'd for higher job classifications -Examine above tests: analysis of form/content	Job Advancement
Personnel Procedures	-Analysizing Managerial Struc-ture of Kaiser -Asking Q's	-Role play: disa-greement over procedure OTJ w/ supervisor	-Memo to super-visor -Describe problem or disagreement over PP	-Personnel manual, job procedures, memos brought in (V/C/D)	-Paycheck problems -Calculating wage/ benefit increases	-Study/discussion: test procedures, policies, and rationales-What do they test?, do they reflect real skills OTJ?	Personnel Procedures
Union Activities	-Developing Q's -Identifying sit-uations where Union plays a role	-Role play:Going to Steward w/ problem-grievance	-Writes notes to Steward/Rep re:grievance -Describe own exp. (LOG) to used in filing grievance	-Contract -Union papers -Reading: Union particip, issues	-Planning for improvements in contract	-What input does Union have re: Job adv. tests? -Recommendations: changing test	Union Activities

draft 4-29-91

APPENDIX B

Name: _____

GETTING AN OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION

1. How many health and safety topics are in the packet? _____
2. In what order are the topics presented? _____
3. How many pages are devoted to each health and safety topic?

4. What is the purpose of the horizontal lines near the top of every page?

5. How many paragraphs are used to explain stress and burnout? _____
6. Regarding Infectious Agents, how many suggestions are given for employees to get management to do? _____
7. Regarding Toxic Chemicals, how many suggestions are given for employees to do? _____
8. If a co-worker complains of skin irritations, which page would you consult? _____
9. If a co-worker complains of exhaustion, which page would you consult? _____
10. Complete the following chart for each health and safety topic discussed in the informational packet:

health & safety topic	page #	explain hazard briefly in your own words	Does hazard affect you?

11. What health and safety hazards NOT included in the informational packet affect you on the job? Please explain:

dis-2052

Date: 7-16-91

To:

From:

Re: (Aids patient)

Is your name about
aids patients on a
working card AIDS p

*

In your introduction,
I think it
would be
helpful toinclude the
idea thatyour concerns
about keeping
AIDS patients
rooms clean.You may want
to combine it
with your
introduction.

1. Aids Patient suffers harshly
every day. The AIDS disease
has become one of the
world number one subjects
so far researchers has found
no cure for this deadly disease
while researchers are working
very hard for answers and
cures.

2. We will have to learn to ^{incomple} ^{anti}

work around our aids patients.
We should accept our aids patient. Keep
our aids patient room clean.
(They also notice cleanliness)

For paragraph
2, you could write
use about how
AIDS creates
health & safety
problem for hospital
workers.

inspire of their ^{their} severe illness.
(Always Clean room with person)
icide. This is like a suggestion that should be
made to paragraph 3.

There are
several
factors
(points).
You need
to add
few more
to each
factor
make a
complete
sentence

3.

Is this
about the
problem
or
the
solution?

We also can use Chlorox
but it could cause nausea, by
the fumes it carries. Its such
a terrible disease we have
to be careful about the

After
this
is
done
it

Are these
your
suggestions
for solving
the
health
safety
problem?

I feel when a Aids patient are air-borne patient have been discharged from these ^{their} room, the room should be clean with Germicide and window as well. And new Curtains surrounding the bed be replace, Cause of illness that it surround.

Is this a ^{new} paragraph? The new patient should not have to use the same said (dirty) Curtains.

We are going to the store

We are here now

Your Car or mine

Plural

Adverb

There she is ^{possessive}

(Pronouns)

in their room

They're coming to class

"
They are

APPENDIX D

Introductions

Directions:

- A. Place an X in front of 7 categories (below) that interest you.
- B. In a little while, we will walk around and interview one another. When you find someone who fits one of your seven categories, get that person's signature in the appropriate space.
- C. Important note: During the interview time, talk to lots of people so you can get a different signature for each of your seven categories.

- _____ 1. Is a parent _____
- _____ 2. Has done health care work for over 10 years _____
- _____ 3. Gets angry at work _____
- _____ 4. Enjoys writing letters _____
- _____ 5. Wants to be a nurse _____
- _____ 6. Plays a musical instrument _____
- _____ 7. Has been in the military _____
- _____ 8. Likes to read novels _____
- _____ 9. Has filed a union grievance _____
- _____ 10. Reads the newspaper every day _____
- _____ 11. Is athletic _____
- _____ 12. Grew up in the Southern part of the U.S. _____
- _____ 13. Likes to sing _____
- _____ 14. Feels nervous about being in class _____
- _____ 15. Enjoys mathematics _____
- _____ 16. Likes to cook _____
- _____ 17. Intimidates management _____
- _____ 18. Wants to be an x-ray technician _____
- _____ 19. Is an optimist _____
- _____ 20. Was born under my astrological sign _____

APPENDIX E

Name _____

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT READING AND WRITING

Your responses on this questionnaire will help us plan classroom activities.

1. Which one of the following statements best describes you?

- _____ A. I would like to work on writing more than reading.
- _____ B. I would like to work on reading more than writing.
- _____ C. I would like to work on both reading and writing.

Comments about writing and reading: _____

2. What kind of writing practice would be most helpful to you?

(Rank your responses by putting 1 in front of your first choice. 2 in front of your second choice. 3 in front of your third choice, etc.)

- _____ A. journal writing about your experiences and thoughts
- _____ B. memo to a supervisor
- _____ C. memo to a union representative
- _____ D. memo to a co-worker
- _____ E. nursing chart notes
- _____ F. letter to _____
- _____ G. articles for local union publication
- _____ H. (other:) _____
- _____ I. (other:) _____

Comments about writing activities: _____

3. Which of these skills do you want to work on?

(Rank your responses by putting 1 in front of your first choice. 2 in front of your second choice. 3 in front of your third choice, etc.)

- _____ A. putting my thoughts down on paper
- _____ B. organizing my ideas into paragraphs
- _____ C. understanding sentences and punctuation
- _____ D. spelling
- _____ E. (other:) _____
- _____ F. (other:) _____

Comments about writing skills: _____

4. What kinds of reading would you like to do in class?

(Rank your responses by putting 1 in front of your first choice. 2 in front of your second choice. 3 in front of your third choice, etc.)

- _____ A. health and safety information
- _____ B. job instructions
- _____ C. memos from supervisors
- _____ D. union contract
- _____ E. medical terminology
- _____ F. newspaper articles
- _____ G. short story (fiction) about health care workers
- _____ H. interviews with health care workers
- _____ I. poetry about health care workers
- _____ J. (other:) _____
- _____ K. (other:) _____

5. Do you have material that could be read and discussed in class?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Maybe

If you answered "yes" or "maybe," use the following list to check off the types of reading material that you have and could share with the class. (You can check more than one type.)

_____ A. health and safety information

_____ B. job instructions

_____ C. memos from supervisors

_____ D. union contract

_____ E. medical terminology

_____ F. newspaper articles about _____

_____ G. short stories (fiction) about health care workers

_____ H. interviews with health care workers

_____ I. poetry about health care work

_____ J. (other:) _____

_____ K. (other:) _____

6. Which of these reading skills do you want to work on?

(Rank your responses by putting 1 in front of your first choice. 2 in front of your second choice. 3 in front of your third choice, etc.)

_____ A. figuring out words I don't already know

_____ B. understanding what I read

_____ C. telling about what I read in my own words

_____ D. reading directions and following them

_____ E. using a dictionary or thesaurus

_____ F. (other:) _____

Comments about reading skills: _____

